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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The King James English version has been followed in the Bible quotations of this translation, except in a few cases where an alteration in the Revised Version was evidently the result of a better understanding of the original Greek or Hebrew text.

For the form of proper names, the spelling of the Century Dictionary has been used as a rule; for names not given in the Century, the form current in the usual standard works. Since this book is intended to be popular rather than either scholarly or archæological, it was thought best to use the name-forms best known to most readers.

It will be noted that a number of the quotations are mosaics made up of phrases taken from different parts of the Bible and put together to make one passage. This not being the English usage in such matters, it seems desirable to call the reader's attention to the character of such quotations.

The only other explanation which may be necessary is in connection with the omission of occasional sentences, paragraphs and of one or two chapters. In the case of individual sentences or phrases, they were usually omitted because they contained an allusion sure to be obscure to non-Italian readers. A characteristic example of such omissions is in the scene of the crucifixion where Christ is described as being nailed to the cross with outstretched arms like an owl nailed with outstretched wings to a barn-door. This revolting country-side custom being unknown to American readers, a reference to it could only cloud the passage.

Since translators into English who omit passages are usually accused of suppressing valuable material which might displease too-narrow Anglo-Saxon readers, it is perhaps as well to explain that the excision of paragraphs here and there, and of a few chapters, is in no sense an expurgation, because this *Life of Christ* is very much of the same quality throughout. It simply seemed to me that such occasional lightening of the text would make it more acceptable to English-speaking readers, so much less tolerant of long descriptions and minute discussions than Italians.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

I quite realize that this may seem a slight and arbitrary basis for making actual excisions in an author's work, and I understand that the translator is not at all responsible for the matter which he translates, but only for the truthfulness with which he presents the text given him to set into another language. I was moved first by the fact that the passages omitted are of no more importance than any other passages in the book; and secondly by the author's wish expressly stated in his Introduction, to have this a readable book which will hold those who pick it up, rather than to have it a book of exact learning or great literature. This translation was made with the purpose of allowing the general American reading-public to form an opinion on a book which has aroused a great deal of discussion in modern Italy; and to carry out this purpose, the occasional omissions mentioned and a certain freedom in the rendering of the Italian seemed to me justifiable.

DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER.

LIFE OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

I

For five hundred years those who call themselves free spirits because they prefer prison life to army service have been trying desperately to kill Jesus a second time—to kill Him in the hearts of men.

The army of His enemies assembled to bury Him as soon as they thought they heard the death-rattle of Christ's second death. Presumptuous donkeys mistaking libraries for their stables, top-heavy brains pretending to explore the highest heavens in philosophy's drifting balloon, professors poisoned by the fatal strong drink of philology and metaphysics, armed themselves. Paraphrasing the rallying-cry of Peter the Hermit to the crusaders, they shouted "Man wills it!" as they set out on their crusade against the Cross. Certain of them drew on their boundless imaginations to evolve what they considered proof positive of a fantastic theory that the story of the Gospel is no more than a legend from which we can reconstruct the natural life of Jesus as a man, one-third prophet, one-third necromancer, one-third demagogue, a man who wrought no miracles except the hypnotic cure of some obsessed devotees, who did not die on the cross, but came to Himself in the chill of the sepulcher and reappeared with mysterious airs to delude men into believing that He had risen from the dead.

Others demonstrated as certainly as two and two make four that Jesus was a myth developed in the time of Augustus and of Tiberius, and that all the Gospels can be reduced to a clumsy mosaic of prophetic texts. Others conceived of Jesus as a good, well-meaning man, but too high-flown and fantastic, who went to school to the Greeks, the Buddhists, and the Essenes and patched together His plagiarisms as best He could to support His claim to be the Messiah of Israel. Others made Him out to be an unbalanced humanitarian, precursor of Rousseau and of divine democracy; an excellent man for his time but who to-day would be put under the care of an alienist. Others to get rid of the subject once for all took up the idea of the myth again, and by dint of puzzlings and comparisons concluded that Jesus never was born anywhere in any spot on the globe.

But who could have taken the place of the man they were trying to dispose of? The grave they dug was deeper every day, and still they could not bury Him from sight.

Then began the manufacture of religions for the irreligious. During the whole of the nineteenth century they were turned out in couples and half dozens at a time: the religion of Truth, of the Spirit, of the Proletariat, of the Hero, of Humanity, of Nationalism, of Imperialism, of Reason, of Beauty, of Peace, of Sorrow, of Pity, of the Ego, of the Future and so on. Some were only new arrangements of Christianity, uncrowned, spineless Christianity, Christianity without God; most of them were political, or philosophic, trying to make themselves out mystics. But faithful followers of these religions were few and their ardor faint. Such frozen abstractions, although sometimes helped along by social interest or literary passions, did not fill the hearts which had renounced Jesus.

Then attempts were made to throw together facsimiles of religion which would make a better job of offering what men looked for in religion. Free-Masons, Spiritualists, Theosophists, Occultists, Scientists, professed to have found the infallible substitute for Christianity. But such mixtures of moldy superstition and worm-eaten necromancy, such a hash of musty rationalism and science gone bad, of simian symbolism and humanitarianism turned sour, such unskillful rearrangements of Buddhism, manufactured-for-export, and of betrayed Christianity, contented some thousands of leisure-class women, of condensers of the void . . . and went no further.

In the meantime, partly in a German parsonage and partly in a professor's chair in Switzerland, the last Anti-Christ was making ready. "Jesus," he said, coming down from the Alps in the sunshine, "Jesus mortified mankind; sin is beautiful, violence is beautiful. Everything that says 'yes' to Life is beautiful." And Zarathushtra, after having thrown into the Mediterranean the Greek texts of Leipzig and the works of Machiavelli, began to gambol at the feet of the statue of Dionysius with the grace that might be expected of a German, born of a Lutheran minister, who had just stepped down from a chair in a Swiss University. But, although his songs were sweet to the ear, he never succeeded in explaining exactly what he meant when he spoke of this adorable "Life" to which men should sacrifice such a living part of themselves as their need to repress their own animal instincts: nor could he ever say in what way Christ, the true Christ of the Gospels, opposed Himself to life, He who wanted to make life higher and happy. And the poor syphilitic Anti-Christ, when insanity was close upon him, signed his last letter, "The Crucified One."

2

And still Christ is not yet expelled from the earth either by the ravages of time or by the efforts of men. His memory is everywhere: on the walls of the churches and the schools, on the tops of bell-towers and of mountains, in street-shrines, at the heads of beds and over tombs, thousands of crosses bring to mind the death of the Crucified One. Take away the frescoes from the churches, carry off the pictures from the altars and from the houses, and the life of Christ fills museums and picture-galleries. Throw away breviaries and missals, and you find His name and His words in all the books of literature. Even oaths are an involuntary remembrance of His presence.

When all is said and done, Christ is an end and a beginning, an abyss of divine mystery between two divisions of human history. Paganism and Christianity can never be welded together. Before Christ and After Christ! Our era, our civilization, our life, begins with the birth of Christ. We can seek out what comes before Christ, we can acquire information about it, but it is no longer ours, it is signed with other signs, limited by other systems, no longer moves our passions; it may be beautiful, but it is dead. Cæsar was more talked about in his time than Jesus, and Plato taught more science than Christ. People still discuss the Roman ruler and the Greek philosopher, but who nowadays is hotly for Cæsar or against him; and where now are the Platonists and the anti-Platonists?

Christ, on the contrary, is still living among us. There are still people who love Him and who hate Him. There is a passion for the love of Christ and a passion for His destruction. The fury of so many against Him is a proof that He is not dead. The very people who devote themselves to denying His ideas and His existence pass their lives in bringing His name to memory.

We live in the Christian era, and it is not yet finished. If we are to understand the world, our life, ourselves, we must refer to Christ. Every age must re-write its own Gospel. More than any other, our own age has so re-written its own Gospel, and therefore the author ought perhaps to justify himself for having written this book. But the justification, if there is need of such, will be plain to those who read it.

There never was a time more cut off from Christ than ours, nor one which needed Him more. But to find Him, the old books are not enough. No life of Christ, even if it were written by an author of greater genius than any who has ever lived, could be more beautiful and perfect than the Gospels. The candid sobriety of the first four stories can never be improved upon by any miracle of style and poetry. And we can add very little to the information they give us.

But who reads the Gospels nowadays? And who could read them, even if he set himself at it. Glosses of philologists, comments of the exegetical experts, varying readings of erudite marginal editors, emendations of letters, such things can provide entertainment for patient brains. But the heart needs something more than this.

Every generation has its preoccupations and its thoughts, and its own insanities. The old Gospels must be re-translated for the help of the lost. If Christ is to remain alive in the life of men, eternally present with us, it is absolutely necessary to resuscitate Him from time to time; not to color Him with the dyes of the present day, but to represent with new words, with references to things now happening, His eternal truth and His never-changing story.

The world is full of such bookish resuscitations of Christ, learned or literary: but it seems to the author of this one that many are forgotten, and others are not suitable. To write the history of the stories of Christ would take another book and one even longer than this one. But it is easy to divide into two great divisions those which are best known and most read: (1) Those written by orthodox authors for the use of the orthodox; (2) and those written by scientists for the use of non-believers. Neither the first nor the second can satisfy those who are seeking in such lives for Life.

3

The lives of Jesus written for pious readers exhale, almost all of them, a sort of withered mustiness, the very first page of which repels readers used to more delicate and substantial fare. There is an odor of burnt-out lamp-wick, a smell of stale incense and of rancid oil that sticks in the throat. You cannot draw a long, free breath. The reader acquainted with the biographies of great men written with greatness, and possessing some notions of his own about the art of writing and of poetry, who incautiously picks up one of these pious books, feels his heart fail him as he advances into this flabby prose, torpid, tangled, patched up with commonplaces that were alive a thousand years ago, but which are now dead and petrified. It is even worse when these worn-out old hacks try to break into the lyric gallop or the trot of eloquence. Their faded graces, their ornamentations of countrified purisms, of "fine writing" fit for provincial academies, their artificial warmth cooled down to tepidity by unctuous dignity, discourage the endurance of the boldest reader. And when they are not engulfed in the thorny mysteries of scholasticism, they fall into the roaring eloquence of the Sunday sermon. In short, these are books written for readers who believe in Jesus, that is, for those who could, in a way, get along without them. But ordinary people, indifferent people, irreverent people, artists, those accustomed to the greatness of Antiquity and to the novelty of Modernity, never look at even the best of such volumes; or if they pick them up, let them fall at once. And yet these are the very people whom such a book should win because they are those whom Christ has lost, they are those who today form public opinion and count in the world.

Another sort of books, those written by the learned men for the neutrals, succeed even less in turning towards Christ the souls that have not learned the way to Christianity. In the first place they almost never have any intention of doing this, and in the second place they themselves, almost all of them, are among those who ought to be brought back to the true and living Christ. Furthermore, their method which is, as they say, historical, scientific, critical, leads them to pause over texts and external facts, to establish them or to eliminate them, rather than to consider the meaning and the value and the light which, if they would, they could find in those texts and those facts. Most of them try to find the man in the God, the actual external facts of the miracles, the legend in the tradition and, above all, they are on the look-out for interpolations, for falsifications and apocrypha in the first part of Christian literature. Those who do not go so far as to deny that Jesus ever lived, take away from the testimony about Him everything they can, and by dint of "ifs" and "buts" and doubts and hypotheses, so far from writing any definite story themselves, succeed in spoiling the story contained in the Gospels. In short, such historians with all their confusion of fret-work and bunglings, with all the resources of textual criticism, of mythology, of paleography, of archeology, of Greek and Hebrew philology, only triturate and liquefy the simple life of Christ. The most logical conclusion to draw from their rambling incoherent talk is that Jesus never did appear on the earth, or if by chance He really did appear, that we know nothing certain about His life. Christianity still exists, of course, in spite of such conclusions, and Christianity is a fact not easily disregarded. To offset this fact the best these enemies of Christ can do is to search through the Orient and Occident for the origins, as they say, of Christianity, their intention being quite openly to parcel it out among its predecessors, Jewish, Greek, for that matter Hindu and Chinese, as if to say: "You see, your Jesus at bottom was not only a man, but a poor specimen of a man, since he said nothing that the human race did not know by heart before his day."

One might ask these deniers of miracles how they explain the miracle of a syncretism of old traditions which has grown about the memory of an obscure plagiarist, an immense movement of men, of thoughts, of institutions, so strong, overwhelmingly strong, as to change the face of the earth for centuries. But this question, and many others, we will not put to them, at least for the present.

In short, when in looking for light we pass from the bad taste of the devotional compilers to the writers who monopolize "historic truth" we fall from pietistic boredom into sterile confusion. The pious writers are unable to lead men to Christ, and the "historians" lose Him in controversy. And neither one nor the other tempt men to read. They may differ from each other in matters of faith, but they resemble each other in the uncouthness of their style. And unctuous rhetoric is as distasteful to cultivated minds, even superficially acquainted with the divine idyll and divine tragedy of the Gospels, as is the coldheartedness of learned writers. So true is all this that even today, after the passage of so many years, after so many changes of taste and opinion, the only life of Jesus which is read by many lay readers is that of the apostate priest, Renan, a book which all true Christians dislike for its dilettante attitude, insulting even in praise, and which every real historian distrusts because of its compromises and its insufficient scholarship. But although this book of Renan's seems written by a skeptical romancer, wedded to philology, or by a Semitic scholar suffering from literary nostalgia, it has the merits of being really "written," that is, of getting itself read, even by those who are neither believers nor specialists.

To make itself readily read is not the only value nor the greatest which a book can have, and the writer who contents himself with that alone and who thinks of nothing else shows that vanity rather than ardor is his motive-power. But let us admit that to be readable is a merit and not a small merit for a book, especially when it is not intended as a tool for study, but when it aims at the mark called, "moving the emotions," or to give it its real name, when its aim is to "transform human beings."

The author of the present book finds—and if he is mistaken he will be very glad to be convinced by any one who sees more clearly than he—that in the thousands of books which tell the story of Jesus, there is not one which seeks, instead of dogmatic proofs and learned discussions, to give food fit for the soul, for the needs of men of our time.

The book we need is a living book, to make Christ more living, to set Christ the Ever-Living with loving vividness before the eyes of living men, to make us feel Him as actually and eternally present in our lives. We need a book which would show Him in all His living and present greatness—perennial and yet belonging intimately to us moderns—to those who have scorned and refused Him, to those who do not love Him because they have never seen His true face; which would show how much there is of supernatural and symbolic in the human, obscure, simple and humble beginning of His life, and how much familiar humanity, how much simple-hearted plainness shines out when He becomes a Heavenly Deliverer at the end of His life, when He becomes a martyr and rises again divinely from the dead. We need a book which would show in that tragic epic, written by both Heaven and earth, the many teachings suited to us, suited to our time and to our life, which can be found there, not only in what Christ said, but in the very succession of events which begin in the stable at Bethlehem and end in the cloud over Bethany. A book written by a layman for the laymen who are not Christians or who are only superficially Christians, a book without the affectations of professional piety and without the insipidity of scientific literature, called "scientific" only because it perpetually fears to make the slightest affirmation. A book, in short, written by a modern writer who respects and understands his art, and knows how to hold the attention even of the hostile.

4

The author of this book does not pretend to have written such a book; but at least he has tried as far as his capacities can take him, to draw near to that ideal.

Let him state at once with sincere humility that he has not written a "scientific history." In the first place because he could not; in any case because he would not, even if he had possessed all the necessary learning. He warns the reader, among other things, that this book was written (almost all of it) in the country, in a distant and sparsely settled countryside with very few books at hand, with no advice from friends or revision from masters. It will, therefore, never be cited by higher criticism or by those who scrutinize original sources with a microscope; but that is of little importance compared to the possibility of its doing a little good to a few souls, even to one alone. For as he has explained, the author wishes this book to be another coming of Christ and not another burial.

The author bases his book on the Gospels; as much, let it be understood, on the synoptic Gospels as on the fourth. He confesses that he has no interest in the endless dissertations and disputes over the authority of the four Gospels, over their dates and interpolations, over their mutual relationship, and over their probabilities and sources. We have no older nor no other documents, contemporaneous, Jewish or Pagan, which would permit us to correct them or to deny them. He who goes into all this minute investigation can destroy many doctrines, but he cannot advance the true knowledge of Christ by a single step. Christ is in the Gospels, in the apostolic tradition, and in the Church. Outside of that is darkness and silence. He who accepts the four Gospels must accept them wholly, entire, syllable by syllable,—or else reject them from the first to the last and say, "We know nothing." To attempt in these texts to differentiate what is sure from what is probable, what is historic from what is legendary, what is original from what has been added, the primitive from the dogmatic is a hopeless undertaking, which almost always ends in defeat, in the despair of the readers, who in the midst of this hubbub of contradictory systems, changing from one decade to another, end by understanding nothing and by letting it all drop. The most famous New Testament authorities agree on only one thing, that the Church was able to select in the great mass of primitive literature the oldest Gospels thought up to that time to be the most reliable. No more need be asked.

In addition to the Gospels, the author of this book has had before his eyes "the Logia and the Agrapha," which seemed to have the most evangelical flavor, and also some apocryphal texts used with judgment. And finally nine or ten modern books which he had at hand.

It seems to him as well as he can judge, that he has departed sometimes from ordinary ideas and that he has painted a Christ who has not always the perfunctory features of the ordinary holy picture, but he is not sure of this nor does he value any new thing which may be in this book, written more in the hope of having it a good book than of having it a beautiful book. It is rather more likely that he has repeated things already said by others, of which he in his ignorance has never heard. In these matters, the subject, which is truth, is unchangeable and there can be nothing new except the manner of presenting it in a form more efficacious because it may be more easily grasped.

Just as he has tried to avoid the thorns of erudite criticism on the one hand, he has no pretensions, on the other, of going too deeply into the mysteries of theology. He has approached Jesus with the simple-heartedness of longing and of love, just as during His life-time He was approached by the fishermen of Capernaum, who were, fortunately for them, even more ignorant than the author. Holding loyally to the words of the orthodox Gospels and to the dogmas of the Catholic Church, he has tried to represent those dogmas and those words in unusual ways, in a style violent with contrasts and with foreshortening, colored with crude and vividly felt words, to see if he could startle modern souls used to highly colored error, into seeing the truth.

The author claims the right to take to himself the words of

St. Paul: "To them that are without law, I became as without law that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the Gospel's sake."

The author has tried to present not only the Hebrew world, but the world of antiquity, hoping to show how new and how great Christ was compared to those who preceded Him. He has not always followed the chronological order of events, because it better suited his aims, which are not (as he has said) entirely historical, to gather together certain groups of thoughts and facts and to throw a stronger light on them instead of leaving them to be scattered here and there in the course of the narrative.

In order not to give a pedantic look to the book he has suppressed all references to quotations and has used no foot-notes. He did not wish to seem what he is not, a learned bibliographer, and he did not wish to have his work smell, however faintly, of the oil of the lamp of erudition. Those who understand these things will recognize the un-named authorities, and the solutions which the author has chosen when confronted with certain problems of concordance. The others, those who are only trying to see how Christ appeared to one of them, would be wearied by the apparatus of textual learning and by dissertations at the bottom of the pages. One word only must be said here in connection with the sinning woman weeping at Jesus' feet: although it is generally understood from the Gospel story that there were two different scenes and two different women, the author for artistic purposes has allowed himself to treat them as one, and he asks a pardon for this which he hopes will be easily granted since there is no question of dogma involved.

He must warn the reader that he refrained from developing the episodes where the Virgin Mother appears, in order not to lengthen too greatly a book already long, and especially because of the difficulty of showing by passing allusions all the rich wealth of religious beauty which is in the figure of Mary. Another volume would be necessary for that, and the writer is tempted to try if God grants him life and sight to "say of her what was never said of any woman."

Those who are experienced in reading the Gospels will realize that other things of lesser importance have been shortened and some others, on the contrary, lengthened more than is customary. Some have seemed to the writer more appropriate than the others for his purpose, which is, to use an expression now out of date and distasteful to sophisticated people, the purpose of edification.

5

This book is meant to be a book—the author knows how he will be jeered at—of edification. Not in the meaning of mechanical bigotry, but in the human and manly meaning of the "refashioning" of souls.

To build, or as the old word expressed it, to edify a house, is a great and holy action; to make a shelter against winter and the night. But to build up or edify a soul, to construct it with stones of truth! When there is talk of edification you see in it only an abstract word worn out with use. To edify in the original meaning was to construct walls. Who of you has ever thought of all that goes into the making of a house, a house firm on the earth, and honestly built, with well-plumbed walls, with a good sheltering roof? Think of all that is needed to build a house: well-squared stones, well-baked bricks, sound beams, freshly-burned lime, fine, clean sand, cement that has not lost its strength through age! And then patient, expert workmen to put each thing in its place, to join the stones perfectly one by one, not to put too much water or too much sand in the mortar, to keep the walls damp, to know how to fill in the chinks, to smooth the rough-cast plaster! All this so that a house may go up day by day towards heaven, a man's house, the house where he will bring his wife, the house where his children will be born, where he can invite his friends.

But most people think that to make a book it is enough to have an idea and then to take so many words and put them together. Not so. A kiln of tiles, a pile of rocks, are not a house. To build up a house, to build up a book, to build up a soul, are undertakings which require all of a man's power. The aim of this book is to build up Christian souls because that seems to the writer at this time in this country an urgent need. He who has written it cannot now say whether he will succeed or not. But readers will recognize, he hopes, that it is a real book and not a collection of scraps, not an assemblage of little pieces, a book that may be mediocre and mistaken, but which is constructed: a work built up as well as edifying or building up; a book with its own plan and its own architecture, a real house with its atrium and its architraves, with its divisions and its vaultings—and also with some openings towards heaven and over the fields.

The author of this book is, or would fain be, an artist, and in writing it he could not forget his own character. But he declares here that he has not wished to create a work of Belles Lettres, or as they say now, of "pure poetry," because at least for this time truth is dearer to him than beauty. But if his powers as a writer, however feeble they may be, as a writer loving his art, are sufficient to persuade one more soul, he will be more thankful than ever in his life for the gifts which he has received. His inclination towards poetry has perhaps been of use to him in rendering fresher and more vivid the picture of those things which seem petrified in the usual hieratic consecrated wording.

The man of imagination sees everything as though it were new: every great star, wheeling in the night, might lead you to the house hiding the Son of God; every stable has a manger which, filled with dry hay and clean straw, might become a cradle; every bare mountain top flaming with light in the golden mornings above the still somber valley, might be Sinai or Mt. Tabor: in the fires in the stubble, or in the charcoal kilns shining on the evening hills you can see the flame lighted by God to guide you in the desert; and the column of smoke rising from the poor man's hearth shows the road from afar to the returning laborer. The ass who carries the shepherdess just come from her milking is the one ridden towards the tents of Israel, or the one which went down towards Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. The dove cooing on the edge of the slate roof is the same that announced the end of the great punishment to the Patriarch, or the same that descended on the waters of the Jordan. For the poet everything is of equal value and omnipresent, and all history is sacred history.

The author begs the pardon of his austere contemporaries if rather more than is fitting he lets himself go to what is nowadays disdainfully dubbed eloquence, illegitimate issue of pompous rhetoric and illegitimate mother of overemphasis and other dropsical growths of elocution.

He knows very well that eloquence displeases moderns as bright red cloth displeases the fine city lady, as the organ in a church displeases minuet dancers, but he has not always succeeded in dispensing with it. When it is not borrowed declamation, eloquence is the ardent expression of faith, and in an era which has no faith there is no place for eloquence. And yet the life of Jesus is such a drama and such a poem that in place of the words, worn thread-bare, which we have at our disposition, we should use only those "torn and sentient" words of which Passavanti speaks. Bossuet, who knew something about eloquence, once wrote: "Plût à Dieu que nous puissions détacher de notre parole tout se qui delecte l'esprit, tout ce qui surprend l'imagination, pour ne laisser que la verité toute simple, la seule force et l'efficace toute pure du Saint Esprit, nulle pensée que pour convertir."

Very true, but difficult to achieve.

At times the author of this book would have liked to possess an eloquence vivid and powerful enough to shake all hearts, an imagination rich enough to transport the soul by enchantment into a world of light, of gold and of fire. Yet at other times he almost regretted that he was too much the artist, too much the man of letters, too much given to inlaying and chiseling, and that he did not know how to leave things in their powerful nudity.

Only when he has finished a book does an author know how he ought to have written it. When he has set down the last word, he ought to turn back, begin at the beginning, and do it all over again with the experience acquired in the work. But who has, I do not say the energy to do this, but even the conception that it ought to be done.

If on some of its pages this book sounds like a sermon, there is no great harm done. In these days when for the most part only women, and an occasional old man, go to listen to the preaching in churches, where mediocre things are often said in a mediocre manner, but where more often still, truths are repeated which ought not to be forgotten, we must think of the others, of the scholarly men, of "intellectuals," of the sophisticated, of those who never enter a church, but sometimes step into a book-shop. For nothing in the world would they listen to a friar's sermon, but they condescend to read it when it is printed in a book. And let it be said once and for all, this book is specially written for those who are outside the Church of Christ; the others, those who have remained within, united to the heirs of the Apostles, do not need my words.

The author excuses himself for having written a book with so many, with too many pages, on only one theme. Now that most books—even his own books—are only bundles of pages taken out of journals, or short-winded little stories, or short notes taken from note-books, and generally do not go beyond two or three hundred pages, to have written more than four hundred pages on one theme will seem a tremendous presumption. The book certainly will seem long to modern readers used to light wafers rather than to substantial home-made loaves. But books, like days, are long or short, according to what you put into them. And the author is not so cured of his pride as to think that this book will remain unread on account of its length, and he flatters himself that it may be read with less tedium than other books that are shorter. So difficult it is to cure oneself of conceit—even for those whose wish it is to cure others.

6

Some years ago the author of this book wrote another to describe the melancholy life of a man who wished for a moment to become God. Now in the maturity of his years and of his consciousness he has tried to write the life of a God who made Himself man.

This same writer in those days let his mad and voluble humor run wild along all the roads of paradox, holding that a consequence of the negation of everything transcendental was the need to despoil oneself of any bigotry, even profane and worldly, to arrive at integral and perfect atheism; and he was logical as the "black cherubim" of Dante, because there is only one choice allowed man, the choice between God and nothingness. When man turns from God there is no valid reason to uphold the idols of the tribe or any other of the old fetiches of reason or of passion. In those proud and feverish days he who writes affronted Christ as few men before him have ever done. And yet scarcely six years afterwards (but six years of great travail and devastation without and within his heart), after long months of agitated meditations, he suddenly interrupted another work begun many years ago, and almost as if urged and forced by a power stronger than himself, he began to write this book about Christ which seems to him insufficient expiation for his guilt. It has happened often to Christ that He has been more tenaciously loved by the very men who hated Him at first. Hate is sometimes only imperfect and unconscious love: and in any case it is a better foundation for love than indifference.

How the writer came to discover Christ again, by himself, treading many roads, which all brought him to the foot of the Mount of the Gospel, would be too long and too hard a story to tell. But there is a significance not perhaps wholly personal and private in the example of a man who always from his childhood felt a repulsion for all recognized forms of religious faith, and for all churches, and for all forms of spiritual vassalage and who passed, with disappointments as deep as the enthusiasms had been vivid, through many experiences, the most varied and the most unhackneyed which he could find, who had consumed in himself the ambitions of an epoch unstable and restless as few have been, and who after so many wanderings, ravings and dreamings, drew near to Christ.

He did not turn back to Christ out of weariness, because his return to Christ made life become more difficult and responsibilities heavier to bear; not through the fears of old age, for he can still call himself a young man; and not through desire for worldly fame, because as things go nowadays he would receive more commendation if he continued in his old ideas. But this man, turning back to Christ, saw that Christ is betrayed, and, worse than any affront to Him, that He is being forgotten. And he felt the impulse to bring Him to mind and to defend Him.

For not only His enemies have left Him, and despoiled Him; the very ones who were His disciples when He was alive only half understood Him, and deserted Him at the end; and many of those who were born in His church disobey His commands, care more for His painted pictures than for His living example, and when they have worn out their lips and knees in materialistic piety, think they are quits with Him, and that they have done what He asked of man,—what He still is asking, what He has been asking desperately and always in vain for nineteen hundred years.

A story of Christ written to-day is an answer, a necessary reply, an inevitable conclusion. The balance of modern public opinion is against Christ. A book about Christ's life is therefore a weight thrown into the scales, in order that from the eternal war between love and hate there may result at least the equilibrium of justice. And if the author is called a reactionary, that is nothing to him. The man who is thought to be behind the times often is a man born too soon. The setting sun is the same which at that very moment colors the early morning of a distant country. Christianity is not a piece of antiquity now assimilated, in as far as it had anything good, by the wonderful and not-to-be-improved modern consciousness; but it is for very many something so new that it has not even yet begun. The world to-day seeks for peace rather than for liberty, and the only certain peace is found under the yoke of Christ.

They say that Christ is the prophet of the weak, and on the contrary He came to give strength to the languishing, and to raise up those trodden under foot to be higher than kings.

They say that His is the religion of the sick and of the dying, and yet He heals the sick and brings the sleeping to life. They say that He is against life, and yet He conquers death; that He is the God of sadness, and yet He exhorts His followers to be joyful and promises an everlasting banquet of joy to His friends. They say that He introduced sadness and mortification into the world, and on the contrary when He was alive He ate and drank, and let His feet and hair be perfumed, and detested hypocritical fasts, and the penitential mummeries of vanity. Many have left Him because they never knew Him. This book is especially for such readers.

This book is written, if you will pardon the mention, by a Florentine, a son of the only nation which ever chose Christ for its King. Savonarola first had the idea in 1495, but could not carry it through. In spite of a threatening siege, it was taken up in 1527 and approved by a great majority. Over the door of the Palazzo Vecchio, between Michael Angelo's David and Bandinelli's Hercules, a marble tablet was built into the wall, with these words:

JESUS CHRISTUS REX FLORENTINI
POPULI P. DECRETO ELECTUS.

Although changed by Cosimo, this inscription is still there; the decree was never formally abrogated and denied, and even to-day after four hundred years of usurpations, the writer of this book is proud to call himself a subject and soldier of Christ the King.

LIFE OF CHRIST

JESUS was born in a stable, a real stable, not the bright, airy portico which Christian painters have created for the Son of David, as if ashamed that their God should have lain down in poverty and dirt. And not the modern Christmas-eve "Holy Stable" either, made of plaster of Paris, with little candy-like statuettes, the Holy Stable, clean and prettily painted, with a neat, tidy manger, an ecstatic Ass, a contrite Ox, and Angels fluttering their wreaths on the roof—this is not the stable where Jesus was born.

A real stable is the house, the prison of the animals who work for man. The poor, old stable of Christ's old, poor country is only four rough walls, a dirty pavement, a roof of beams and slate. It is dark, reeking. The only clean thing in it is the manger where the owner piles the hay and fodder.

Fresh in the clear morning, waving in the wind, sunny, lush, sweet-scented, the spring meadow was mown. The green grass, the long, slim blades were cut down by the scythe; and with the grass the beautiful flowers in full bloom—white, red, yellow, blue. They withered and dried and took on the one dull color of hay. Oxen dragged back to the barn the dead plunder of May and June. And now that grass has become dry hay and those flowers, still smelling sweet, are there in the Manger to feed the slaves of man. The animals take it slowly with their great black lips, and later the flowering fields, changed into moist dung, return to light on the litter which serves as bedding.

This is the real stable where Jesus was born. The filthiest place in the world was the first room of the only Pure Man ever born of woman. The Son of Man, who was to be devoured by wild beasts calling themselves men, had as His first cradle the manger where the animals chewed the cud of the miraculous flowers of Spring.

It was not by chance that Christ was born in a stable. What is the world but an immense stable where men produce filth and wallow in it? Do they not daily change the most beautiful, the purest, the most divine things into excrements? Then, stretching themselves at full length on the piles of manure, they say they are "enjoying life." Upon this earthly pig-sty, where no decorations or perfumes can hide the odor of filth, Jesus appeared one night, born of a stainless Virgin armed only with innocence.

THE OX AND THE ASS

First to worship Jesus were animals, not men. Among men He sought out the simple-hearted: among the simple-hearted He sought out children. Simpler than children, and milder, the beasts of burden welcomed Him.

Though humble, though servants of beings weaker and fiercer than they, the ass and the ox had seen multitudes kneeling before them. Christ's own people, the people of Jehovah, the chosen people whom Jehovah had freed from Egyptian slavery, when their leader left them alone in the desert to go up and talk with the Eternal, did they not force Aaron to make them a Golden Calf to worship? In Greece the ass was sacred to Ares, to Dionysius, to Hyperborean Apollo. Balaam's ass, wiser than the prophet, saved him by speaking. Oxus, King of Persia, put an ass in the temple of Ptha, and had it worshiped. And Augustus, Christ's temporal sovereign, had set up in the temple the brazen statue of an ass, to commemorate the good omen of his meeting on the eve of Actium an ass named "The Victorious."

Up to that time the Kings of the earth and the populace craving material things had bowed before oxen and asses. But Jesus did not come into the world to reign over the earth, nor to love material things. He was to bring to an end the bowing down before beasts, the weakness of Aaron, the superstition of Augustus. The beasts of Jerusalem will murder

Him, but in the meantime the beasts of Bethlehem warm Him with their breath. In later years, when Jesus went up to the city of death for the Feast of the Passover, He was mounted on an ass. But He was a greater prophet than Balaam, coming not to save the Jews alone but all men: and He did not turn back from His path, no, not though all the mules of Jerusalem brayed against him.

THE SHEPHERDS

After the animals came those who care for animals. Even if the Angel had not announced the great birth, they would have gone to the stable to see the son of the stranger woman. Shepherds live almost always alone and far away. They know nothing of the distant world, nor of the feast-days of the earth. They are moved by whatever happens near to them, even if it is but a little thing.

But as they were watching their flocks in the long winter night, they were shaken by the light and by the words of the Angel. "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy. . . . Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will." In the dim light of the stable they saw a beautiful young woman gazing silently at her son. And as they saw the baby with His eyes just open, His delicate rosy flesh, His mouth which had not yet eaten, their hearts softened. The birth of a new man, a soul just become incarnate taking upon itself to suffer with other souls, is always a miracle so deep as to move to pity even the simple-hearted who do not understand it. For the shepherds forewarned, this new-born child was not just a baby, but He for whom their suffering race had been waiting, for a thousand years.

The shepherds offered what little they had, that little which is so great when offered with love. They carried the white offerings of their craft, milk, cheese, wool, the lamb. Even today in our mountains, where one finds the last dying traces of hospitality and fraternal feeling, as soon as a wife is delivered of a child, the sisters, wives and daughters of the shepherds come hurrying to her; and not one of them empty-handed.

One has three or four eggs still warm from the nest, another a cup of freshly drawn milk, another a little cheese, another a pullet to make broth for the new mother. A new being has begun his suffering: the neighbors hasten to carry their offerings almost as though to console the mother.

Themselves poor the old-time shepherds did not look down on the poor. Simple as children they loved children. They came of a race born of the Shepherd of Ur, saved by the Shepherd of Madian. Their first kings had been shepherds—Saul and David—shepherds of herds before being shepherds of tribes. But these shepherds of Bethlehem, "unknown to the hard world," were not proud. A poor man was born among them and they looked on Him with affection and lovingly brought Him their poor riches. They knew that this boy, born of poor people in poverty, born of common people in the midst of common people, was to be the redeemer of the humble, of those men of good will, on whom the Angel had called down peace.

THE WISE MEN

Some days after this, three wise men came from Chaldea and knelt before Jesus. They came perhaps from Ecbatana, perhaps from the shores of the Caspian Sea. Mounted on their camels with their full-stuffed saddle-bags, they had forded the Tigris and the Euphrates, crossed the great desert of the nomad tribes, followed along the Dead Sea. They were guided to Judea by a new star like the comet which appears every so often in the sky to announce the birth of a prophet or the death of a Cæsar. They had come to adore a King, and they found a nursing baby, poorly swaddled, hidden within a stable. Almost a thousand years before this, a Queen of the East had come on a pilgrimage to Judea, and she, too, had carried gifts, gold, fragrant perfumes and precious stones; but she had found on the throne the greatest king who had ever reigned in Jerusalem and from him had learned what no one else had been able to teach her.

The wise men found no king. They found a new-born baby, a tiny boy, who could neither ask nor answer questions, a boy who in His maturity was to disdain material treasures, and the learning which is based on material things.

They were not kings, these wise men, but in Media and Persia they were the masters of kings. The kings ruled over the people, but the wise men directed the kings. They alone could communicate with Alma Mazda, the good God. They alone knew the future, and Destiny. They killed with their own hands the enemies of men and of the harvests, snakes, harmful insects, birds of prey. They purified souls, they purified the fields. Except from their hands God accepted no sacrifices. No king began a war without consulting them. Theirs were the secrets of heaven and earth. In the name of science and religion they held first rank in the nation. In the midst of a people sunk in material things they represented the Spirit. It was fitting that they should come to kneel before Jesus. After the animals which are Nature, after the Shepherds which are the common people, this third power which is knowledge knelt at the manger in Bethlehem. The old priestly caste of the Orient made its act of submission before the new Lord, who was to send His Gospel to the west. The learned men knelt before Him who was to set above the learning of words and numbers the new wisdom of love.

Symbolizing the old theology bowing before the final revelation, the wise men at Bethlehem knelt before Innocence: Wealth prostrated itself at the feet of Poverty.

They offered gold to Jesus: gold which He was to tread under foot. They offered it not because Mary in her poverty might need it for the journey, but in anticipation of the command, "Sell all that thou hast and give it to the poor." They offered Him frankincense, not to drown the stench of the stable, but as a token that their own ritual was ended; that their altars would need smoke and perfume no longer. They offered Him myrrh knowing that this boy would die young, and His mother, smiling now, would need spices to embalm the dead body.

Kneeling in their pontifical robes upon the bedding of straw, they, the mighty, the learned, the soothsayers, offered themselves as pledges of the obedience of the world.

Jesus now had received all His rightful investitures. The wise men had scarcely gone when persecutions were begun by those who were to hate Him to the day of His death.

OCTAVIUS AUGUSTUS

When Christ appeared upon the earth, criminals ruled the world unopposed. He was born subject to two sovereigns, the stronger far away at Rome, the weaker and wickeder close at hand in Judea.

One lucky adventurer after wholesale slaughter had seized the empire, another had murdered his way to the throne of David and Solomon. Each rose to high position through trickery, through civil wars, betrayals, cruelty, massacres. They were born to understand one another, were, as a matter of fact, friends and accomplices, as far as was possible between a subordinate rascal and his rascal chief.

Son of the usurer of Velletri, Augustus showed himself cowardly in war and vindictive in victory, false to his friends, cruel in reprisals. To a condemned man who begged only for burial he answered, "That is the business of the vultures." To the Perugians begging for mercy during the massacre he cried, "Moriendum esse!" On a mere suspicion he wanted to tear out the eyes of the Praetor Quintus Gallius before ordering his throat cut. Possessed of the empire, with his enemies crushed and scattered, with the power all in his own hands, he put on a mask of mildness and of his youthful vices kept only his lust. It was told of him, that in his youth, he had sold his body twice, first to Cæsar, and again in Spain to Hirtius for 300,000 sestertia. Now he amused himself with the wives of his friends, with almost public adulteries, and with posing as the restorer of morality.

This filthy, sickly man was sovereign of the western world when Jesus was born, nor did he ever know that One had been born who would bring the dissolution of all that he had founded. The facile philosophy of the plump little plagiarist Horace was enough for him, "To-day let us enjoy wine and love: hopeless death awaits us: there is not a day to be lost!" In vain Virgil, the man of the countryside, friend of woods, of quiet flocks and golden bees, he who had gone down with Æneas to see the sufferers in Avernus and poured his restless melancholy into the music of poetry; in vain Virgil, the loving pious Virgil, had foretold a new era, a new order and a new race, a kingdom of heaven less spiritual, less brilliant than that which Jesus was to announce, but infinitely nobler and purer than the kingdom of Hell which was then making ready. In vain, because Augustus saw in these words only a pastoral fancy and perhaps believed that he, the corrupt master of the corrupt, was the proclaimed Saviour and restorer of the reign of Saturn.

But his vassal of Judea, his great Oriental client, may have had a presentiment of the birth of Jesus, of the true King, who was coming to supplant the king of evil.

HEROD THE GREAT

Herod was a monster, one of the most perfidious monsters of the many which have sprung from the burning deserts of the East. He was not a Jew, nor a Greek, nor a Roman. He was an Idumean, a barbarian who prostrated himself before Rome, and aped the Greeks the better to secure his dominion over the Jews. Son of a traitor, he had usurped the kingdom of his sovereign from the last unfortunate Hasmonæans. To legalize his treachery he married their niece, Mariamne. Afterwards, on a baseless suspicion, he had her killed. It was not his first crime. He had had his brother-in-law, Aristobulus, treacherously drowned. He had condemned his other brothers-in-law, Joseph and Hyrcanus the Second (last of the conquered dynasty). Not content with having killed Mariamne, he put her mother, Alexandra, to death as well, and finally, the sons of Baba, merely because they were distant relatives of the Hasmonæans. In the meantime he amused himself with burning alive Juda of Sarafaus and Matthew of Margoloth with other heads of the Pharisees. Later, afraid that the sons he had had by Mariamne would wish to avenge their mother, he had them strangled. Himself at the point of death he gave the order to kill a third son, Archelaus. Voluptuous, suspicious, impious, greedy of gold and of glory, he never knew peace at home, in Judea or in his own heart. In order that he might bury the recollection of his assassinations he gave the Roman people a present of three hundred talents to spend in festivals. He humiliated himself before Augustus to make him the accomplice of his infamies and, dying, left him ten thousand drachmas and, in addition, a ship of gold and one of silver for Livia.

This half-civilized Arab attempted to conciliate the Greeks and the Jews. He succeeded in bribing the degenerate posterity of Socrates so that in Athens they put up a statue to him, but the Jews hated him to the day of his death. It did him no good, in their eyes, to build up Samaria and restore the temple of Jerusalem. He was always, for them, the heathen and the usurper.

Apprehensive like all ageing evil-doers, and like all new-made princes, he shivered at every fluttering leaf, every shifting shadow. Superstitious like all Orientals, credulous of presages and soothsayers, he readily believed the three wise men when they said, that led by a star, they had come from the interior of Chaldea towards the country which he had fraudulently stolen. Any pretender to the throne, even a fantastic one, could make him tremble, and when he knew from the wise men that a King of Judea was born, his uneasy, barbarian's heart gave a great leap of fear. Seeing that the astrologers did not come back to tell him the place where the new nephew of David had appeared, he ordered that all the boy babies of Bethlehem should be killed.

THE INNOCENTS

Nobody ever knew how many children were sacrificed to the terror of Herod. It was not the first time in Judea that even nursing children had been put to the sword. This same Hebrew people had punished in the olden times cities of their enemies by the massacre of the old men, the wives, the young men and the boys. They saved only the virgins to make them slaves and concubines. God Himself, the jealous Jehovah, had often given the order for the slaughter, and now the Idumean applied to the people who had accepted him, the Mosaic law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

We do not know how many of the Innocents there were, but if we can believe Macrobius we know that among them was a little son of Herod who was at nurse in Bethlehem. For the old King, wife-killer and son-killer, who knows but that this was a form of retribution: who knows but that he suffered when they brought him news of the mistake? A short time after this he also was to die, suffering from loathsome disease. His body began to putrefy while still alive. Worms consumed his organs. Burnt up with fevers, gasping, he could scarcely draw his tainted breath. Disgusting to himself, he tried to kill himself with a knife at table, and finally died, after having given Salome orders to have many young prisoners killed.

The massacre of the Innocents was the last act of the reeking, bloody old man. There is a prophetic meaning in this immolation of the Innocents around the cradle of an Innocent, this holocaust of blood for a new-born child, a child destined to offer His blood for the pardon of the guilty, this human sacrifice for One, who in His turn was to be sacrificed. After His death thousands and thousands were to die for the sole crime of having believed in His resurrection. He was born to die for others and as if to expiate His birth, behold, here are thousands born who die for Him.

There is a tremendous mystery in this blood-offering of the pure, in the death of so many of His contemporaries. They belonged to the generation which was to betray and crucify Him. But those who were killed by the soldiers of Herod that day did not see Him, did not grow up to see their Lord killed. They saved Him with their death, and saved themselves forever. They were innocent and they remained innocent for all eternity. Their fathers and their surviving brothers avenged them later, but they will be pardoned because "they know not what they do!"

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

A Christian poet, an Italian, sang this lullaby to the newborn Jesus:

> Sleep, baby, do not weep,
> Sleep, heavenly babe.
>
> Over your head, the tempests shall not dare to rage!

But the son of Mary did not make Himself man in order to sleep, and the tempests raged, but He was not afraid.

Better than Siddharta, He deserves the name of the Awakened one. How can He sleep in the stable, where the donkey brays, precursor of all donkeys who will bray against Him: where the ox lows, waiting until the other oxen speak at His presence; where the shepherds question Him; where the wise men give Him their blessing? How can He sleep when the shuffling steps of Herod's assassins draw near? How can He ever sleep up to that last night when He will agonize under the olive trees, amid the sleeping bodies of the Eleven?

And Mary cannot sleep. In the evening as soon as the houses of Bethlehem disappear in the darkness and the first lamps are lighted, the mother steals away like a fugitive. She is snatching a life away from the King, she is saving a hope for the people as she presses upon her breast her man-child, her hope, her sorrow.

She goes towards the west, she crosses the old land of Canaan and comes by easy stages—the days are short—to the Nile, to that country of Mizraim which had cost so many tears to her ancestors fourteen centuries before.

Jesus, who carried on the work of Moses and at the same time demolished the work of Moses, goes back over the route taken by the first redeemer. When the Jews were under the whip of the Egyptian slaves, oppressed, mistreated, ill-used, the Shepherd of Median made himself the Shepherd of Israel, and led his hard-headed people across the desert till they were in sight of the Jordan and of the miraculous vineyards. The people of Jesus left Chaldea with Abraham and came with

Joseph into Egypt. Moses led them from Egypt toward Canaan. Now the greatest of the liberators, in danger of his life, went back to the banks of that river where the first Saviour had been saved from the water and had saved his brothers.

Egypt, the rich spawning-bed of all the infamies and all the magnificences of the first epoch, that African India, where the waves of history broke and died, where but a few years before, Pompey and Antony had finished the dream of Empire and of life, this prodigious country, born of water, burned by the sun, covered with the blood of many peoples, inhabited by many animal-gods, this country, paradoxical and supernatural, was by contrast the predestined asylum for the fugitive.

The wealth of Egypt was in mud, in the rich snake-breeding mud which the Nile rolled out each year upon the desert. Death was the obsession of Egypt. The soft, prosperous people of Egypt would not accept death, denied death, thought they could conquer death with graven images, with embalmings, with sculptured representation of flesh-and-blood bodies. The rich, portly Egyptian, son of mud, adorer of the sacred bull, and the dog-headed god, could not resign himself to dying. He manufactured for his second life immense necropolises full of bandaged and perfumed mummies, of images of wood and marble, and raised up pyramids over his corpses, as if stone and mortar might save them from decay.

When Jesus could speak, He was to pronounce the verdict against Egypt: the Egypt which is not only on the banks of the Nile, the Egypt which has not yet disappeared from the face of the earth along with its kings, its sparrow-hawks and its serpents. Christ was to give the final and eternal answer to the terror of the Egyptians. He was to condemn the wealth which comes from mud and returns to mud, and all the fetiches of the pot-bellied river-dwellers of the Nile, and He was to conquer death without sculptured tombs, without mortuary kingdoms, without statues of granite and basalt. His victory over death is won by teaching that sin is greedier than worms and that spiritual purity is the only aromatic which preserves from decay.

The worshipers of mud and of animals, the servants of riches and of the Beast, could not save themselves. Their tombs, high as mountains though they be, decked out like queens' palaces, white and fair to see as those of the Pharisees, guard only ashes, dust returning again to dust, even as the dead bodies of animals. Death cannot be conquered by copying life in wood and stone. Stone crumbles away and turns to dust, wood rots and turns to dust, and both of them are mud—eternal mud.

THE LOST FOUND

But the exile in Egypt was short. Jesus was brought back, held in His mother's arms, rocked throughout the long journey by the patient step of the ass, to His father's house in Nazareth, humble house and shop where the hammer pounded and the rasp scraped until the setting of the sun.

The canonical gospels say nothing of these years: the Apocrypha give many details but unworthy of belief. Luke, the wise doctor, is content to set down that the boy grew and was strong; that is, that he was not sickly and overworked. He was a boy developed as he should be: healthy, a bearer of health, as was fitting in one who was to restore health to others by the mere touch of His hand.

Every year, says Luke, the parents of Jesus went to Jerusalem for the feast of unleavened bread in memory of the escape from Egypt. They went with a crowd of neighbors, friends, and acquaintances to keep each other company on the journey. They were cheerful like people going to a festival rather than to a service in memory of a solemn crisis: for the Passover had become at Jerusalem a great feast day, when all the Jews scattered about the Empire came together.

On the twelfth Passover after the birth of Jesus, as the group from Nazareth was returning from the holy city, Mary found that her son was not with them. All day long she sought for Him, asking every acquaintance, but in vain. The next morning the mother turned back, retraced her steps over the road and went up and down the streets and open places of

Jerusalem, fixing her dark eyes on every boy she met, asking the mothers standing in the open doors, begging her countrymen not yet gone, to help her find her lost son. A mother who has lost her son does not rest until she has found him; she thinks no more of herself, she does not feel weariness, effort, hunger. She does not shake the dust from her clothes nor arrange her hair. She cares not for the curious glances of the passers-by. Her distracted eyes see nothing but the image of him, who is no longer beside her.

Finally on the third day she came to the Temple, looked about in the courts, and saw at last in the shadow of a portico a group of old men talking. She came up timidly, for those men with long cloaks and long beards seemed people of importance who would pay no attention to a plain woman from Galilee, and discovered in the center of the circle the waving hair, the shining eyes, the tanned face, the fresh lips of her Jesus. Those old men were talking with her son of the Law and the Prophets. They were asking Him questions and He was answering; He put questions to them in His turn and they marveled at Him, astonished that a boy should know the words of the Lord so well. But He remembered the books which He had heard read out in the little Synagogue of Nazareth: and His memory had retained every syllable.

Mary remained for a few moments gazing at Him, hardly believing her eyes. Her heart, a moment before beating fast with fear, was now beating fast with astonishment. But she could not restrain herself any more and suddenly in a loud voice called Him by name. The old men took themselves off and the mother snatched her son to her breast and silently clasped Him to her, the tears which she had kept back till then raining down on His face.

She clutched Him, took Him away, and then, certain that she had Him with her, that she had not lost Him, the happy mother remembered the despairing mother, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing."

"How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

Weighty words, especially when said by a twelve-year-old boy to a mother who had sought Him for three long days.

And, the Evangelist goes on, "And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them." But after so many centuries of Christian experience we can understand those words, which seemed at first sight to be hard and proud.

How is it that ye sought me? Do you not know that I can never be lost, that I can never be lost by any one, even those who will bury me under the earth? I will be everywhere where any one believes in me, even if they do not see me with their eyes. I cannot be lost from any man, by any man, provided that he hold me in his heart. I shall not be lost alone in the desert nor alone on the waters of the lake, nor alone in the garden of olives, nor alone in the tomb.

"And who is this father of whom you speak to me? He is the legal father, the human father, but my real Father is in heaven. He is the Father who spoke to the patriarchs face to face, who put words into the mouths of the prophets. I know what He told them of me, His eternal wishes, the laws He has given to His people, the covenant which He has signed with all men. If I am to do what He has commanded me, I must be busy about what is truly His. What is a legal, temporal tie confronted with a mystic, spiritual and eternal bond?"

THE WOODWORKER

But the hour for really leaving His home had not come for Jesus. The voice of John had not yet been heard; and with His father and mother He once more went along the road to Nazareth and returned to Joseph's shop to help him in his trade.

Jesus did not go to school to the Scribes nor to the Greeks. But He did not lack for teachers. Three teachers He had, greater than all the learned: work, nature and the Book.

It must never be forgotten that Jesus was a working man and the adopted son of a working man: that He was born poor, among people who worked with their hands; before He gave out His gospel He earned His daily bread with the labor of His hands. Those hands which blest the simple-hearted, which cured the lepers, which gave light to the blind, which brought the dead to life, those hands which were pierced with nails upon the cross, were hands which had been bathed with the sweat of labor, hands which had known the numbness of work, hands which were callous with work, hands which had held the tools of work, which had driven nails into wood, the hands of a working man.

Before being a workman of the spirit, Jesus was a man who worked with material things. He was poor before He summoned the poor to His table, to the festival of His Kingdom. He was not born into a wealthy family, into the house of luxury on a bed covered with purple and fine linen. Descendant of kings, He lived in a woodworker's shop: Son of God He was born in a stable. He did not belong to the caste of the great, to the aristocracy of warriors, to the circles of the rich, to the Sanhedrim of the priests. He was born into the lowest class of the people, the class which has below it only the vagabonds, the beggars, the fugitives, the slaves, the criminals, the prostitutes. When He became no longer a manual worker, He went down lower yet in the eyes of respectable folk, and sought His friends in that miserable huddle which is even below the common people. But until that day when Jesus, before going down into the Inferno of the dead, went down into the Inferno of the living, His position was that of a poor working man and nothing more, in the hierarchy of castes which eternally separates men.

Jesus' trade is one of the four oldest and most sacred of men's occupations. The trades of the peasant, the mason, the smith, and the carpenter are, among the manual arts, those most impregnated with the life of man, the most innocent and the most religious. The warrior degenerates into a bandit, the sailor into a pirate, the merchant into an adventurer, but the peasant, the mason, the smith, the carpenter do not betray, cannot betray, do not become corrupt. They handle the most familiar materials, and their task is to transform them visibly into visible, solid, concrete creations, useful to all men. The peasant breaks the clod and takes from it the bread eaten by the saint in his grotto and the murderer in his prison; the mason squares the stone and builds up the house of the poor man, the house of the king, the house of God. The smith heats and fashions the iron to give a sword to the soldier, a plowshare to the peasant, a hammer to the carpenter. The carpenter saws and nails the wood to construct the door which protects the house from the thieves, to make the bed on which thieves and innocent people die.

These plain things, these common, ordinary, usual things, so usual, common and ordinary that they pass disregarded under our eyes used to more complicated marvels, are the simplest creations of man, but more miraculous and essential than any later inventions.

Jesus, the carpenter, lived in His youth in the midst of these things, made them with His hands, and for the first time by means of these things manufactured by Him, entered into communion with the daily life of men, with the most intimate and sacred life, home life. He made the table around which it is so sweet to sit in the evening with one's friends, even if one of them is a traitor; the bed whereon man draws his first and last breath; the chest where the country wife keeps her poor clothes, her aprons, her handkerchiefs for festivals, and the starched white shirts for great days. He made the kneading trough where the flour is put, and the leaven raises it until it is ready for the oven; and the arm-chair where the old men sit around the fire of an evening to talk of never-returning youth.

Often while the thin, light shavings curled up under the steel of His plane and the sawdust rained down on the ground, Jesus must have thought of the promises of the Father, of the prophecies of old time, of what He was to create, not with boards and rules, but with spirit and truth.

His trade taught Him that to live means to transform dead and useless things into living and useful things: that the meanest material fashioned and shaped can become precious, friendly, useful to men: that the only way to bring salvation is to transform; and that just as a child's crib or a wife's bed can be made out of a log of olive wood, gnarled, knotty and earthy, so the filthy money-changer and the wretched prostitute can be transformed into true citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

FATHERHOOD

In nature where the sun shines on the good and on the bad, where wheat ripens and grows golden to give bread to Jew and heathen, where the stars shine on the shepherd's cabin and the murderer's prison; where grape clusters turn purple and swell to give wine to the wedding banquet and to the orgies of assassins; where the birds of the air freely singing find their food without fatigue, where thieving foxes also have their refuge and the lilies of the field are clad in more splendor than kings, Jesus found the earthly confirmation of His eternal certainty that God is not a Master who punishes one day of enjoyment by a thousand years of reproach, nor a fierce war-like Jehovah who commands the extermination of enemies, nor a kind of grand sultan who delights in being served by satraps of high lineage and keeps close watch that his servants execute to the last detail the rigorous ritualistic etiquette of that Regia Curia, which is the Temple.

As a Son, Christ knew that God is Father: Father of all mankind and not only of the people of Abraham. The love of a husband is strong but carnal and jealous. The love of a brother is often poisoned with envy; that of a son stained with rebellion; that of a friend spotted with deceit; that of a master swollen with condescending pride; only the love of a father towards his children is perfect love, pure, disinterested love. The father does for his son what he would do for no one else. His son is his creation, flesh of his flesh and of his bone, grown up by his side day by day, a completion and a complement of his own being. The old man lives again in the young man. The past sees itself in the future. He who has lived sacrifices himself for him who is to live. The father lives in the son, and feels himself exalted. This child was born to him in a moment of passion in the arms of the woman chosen from among all other women, born through the divine anguish of this woman, cared for and preserved by his own tears and sweat. He has seen him grow up at his feet, he has warmed his cold little hands between his own, he has heard his first words, eternal miracle ever new! He has seen his first wavering footsteps on the floor of his house. Little by little, he has seen a soul shine out in that body created by him, a new human soul, unique treasure beyond price! Little by little on that face he has seen his own features and those of the child's mother, of that woman with whom only in this common fruit is he corporeally identified. A human couple who long to become one body through love, attain this unity only in a child. In the presence of this new being, his creation, he feels himself a creator, beneficent, powerful, happy. Because the son looks to his father for everything, and in his childhood has faith only in his father, feels safe only near his father, his father knows that he must live for him, suffer for him, work for him. A father is a God on earth for a son, and a son is almost a God for the father.

In the love of a father there is no trace of a brother's perfunctory sense of duty, no trace of a friend's self-interest and rivalry, of a lover's lustful desire, a servant's pretense of faithfulness.

The love of a father is pure love, the only true love, the only love rightly to be called love. Purged of any elements foreign to its essence, it is the happiness of sacrificing oneself for the happiness of others.

This idea of God as Father, which is one of the great new ideas of the gospel of Christ, this profoundly renovating idea that God is Father and loves us as a father loves his children, not as a king loves his slaves; and gives daily bread to all his children and has a loving welcome even for those who sin if only they return to lean their heads upon his breast: this idea which closes the epoch of the old covenant and marks the beginning of the new covenant, Jesus found in nature. As Son of God and one with the Father, He had always been conscious of this paternity scarcely glimpsed by the most luminous of the prophets. But now sharing all human experience He saw it reflected and as it were revealed in the universe and He was to use the most beautiful images of the natural world to transmit to men the first of His joyful messages.

THE COUNTRY

Jesus, like all great souls, loved the country. The sinner craving purification, the saint moved to prayer, the poet eager to create, take refuge on the mountains in green shadows, by the sound of the water, in the midst of fields which perfume heaven, or on steep desert hills parched by the sun. Jesus took His language from the country: He hardly ever uses learned words, abstract conceptions, drab and generalizing terms. His talk blossoms with colors, is perfumed by odors of field and of orchard, is peopled by the figures of familiar animals. He saw in His Galilee the figs swelling and ripening under the great, dark leaves: He saw the dry tendrils of the vine greened over with leaves, and from the trellises the white and purple clusters hanging down for the joy of the vintage; He saw from the invisible seed, the mustard raise itself up with its rich light branches, He heard in the night the mournful rustle of the reeds shaken by the wind along the ditches: He saw the seed of grain buried in the earth and its resurrection in the form of a full ear; when the air first began to be warm, He saw the beautiful red, yellow and purple lilies in the midst of the tender green of the wheat: He saw the fresh tufts of grass, luxuriant to-day and to-morrow dried and cast into the oven; He saw the peaceful animals and the harmful animals, the dove a little vain of its brilliant neck, cooing of love on the roof, the eagle swooping down with widespread wings upon its prey; the swallows of the air which like kings cannot fall if it is not God's wish: the crows tearing flesh from carrion with their beaks; the loving mother-hen calling the chickens under her wings when the sky darkens and thunders; the treacherous fox, after its kill, slinking back into its dark lair; and the dogs under the table of their masters begging for scraps that fall to the ground. He saw the serpent writhing through the grass and the dark viper hiding among the scattered stones of the tombs.

Born among the shepherds, He who was to become shepherd of men knew and loved the flocks; the ewes searching for the lost lamb, the lambs bleating weakly, and sucking, almost hidden under their mother's woolly bodies, the flocks sweltering on the thin hot pastures of their hills; He loved with equal love the tiny seed which you can scarcely see on the palm of your hand and the ancient fig tree, casting its shade over the poor man's house; the birds of the air which sow not neither do they reap; the fish silvering the meshes of the nets to feed His faithful; and raising His eyes in the sultry evenings of gathering storm, He saw the lightning flashing out of the east and shattering the darkness of the night, even into the west.

But Jesus did not read only in the open many-colored book of the world. He knew that God spoke to men through angels, patriarchs and prophets. His words, His laws, His victories are written in the Book. Jesus knew the magic black signs by which the dead pass on to those not yet born, the thoughts and memories of olden times. Jesus read only the books where His ancestors had set down the story of His people, the will of the Lord, the vision of the Prophets, but He knew them in the letter and spirit better than the scribes and the doctors: and that knowledge gave Him the right to leave off being scholar and to become teacher.

THE OLD COVENANT

Among all peoples the Jew was the most happy and the most unhappy. His story is a mystery which begins with the idyl in the Garden of Eden and ends with the tragedy of the hill of Golgotha. His first parents were molded by the luminous hands of God, were made masters of Paradise, the country of eternal, fertile summer, set in the midst of rivers, where the rich Oriental fruits hung down ready to their hand, heavy with pulp in the shade of the new young leaves. The new-created sky, not yet sullied by clouds, not yet riven by lightning, or harassed by winds, watched over the first two with all its stars.

The first couple had as their duty to love God and to love each other. This was the First Covenant. Weariness unknown, grief unknown, unknown death and its terror! The first disobedience brought the first exile; the man was condemned to work, the woman to bring forth her young in pain. Work is painful, but it brings the reward of harvests; to give birth means suffering, but it brings the consolation of children. And yet even these inferior and imperfect felicities passed away like leaves devoured by worms. For the first time brother killed brother: human blood fallen on the earth became corrupt, gave forth an exhalation of sin: the daughters of men united themselves with demons and from them were born giants, fierce hunters and slayers of men, who turned the world into a bloody hell.

Then God sent His second punishment: to purify the world in an exterminating baptism He drowned in the waters of the flood all men and their crimes. One only, a righteous man, was saved and with him God signed the Second Covenant.

With Noah there began the happy days of antiquity, the epoch of the patriarchs, nomad shepherds, centenarians who wandered between Chaldea and Egypt searching for grazing lands, for wells, and for peace. They had no fixed country, no houses, no cities. They brought along in caravans, numerous as armies, their fruitful wives, their loving sons, their docile daughters-in-law, their innumerable descendants, obedient man-servants and maid-servants, goring, bellowing bulls, cows with hanging udders, playful calves, rams and strong smelling he-goats, mild sheep laden with wool, great earth-colored camels, mares with round cruppers, she-goats holding their heads high and stamping impatiently; and hidden in the saddle-bags, vases of gold and silver, domestic idols of stone and metal.

Arrived at their destination, they spread their tents near a cistern, and the patriarch sat out under the shade of the oaks and sycamores contemplating the great camp from which rose up the smoke of the fires, the sound of the bustling steps of the women and herdsmen, the mooings, the brayings, the bleating of the animals. And the patriarch's heart was filled with content to see all this progeny issued from his seed, all these, his herds, the human increase and the animal increase multiplying year by year.

In the evening, he raised his eyes to greet the first punctual star which shone like white fire on the summit of the hill; and sometimes his curled white beard shone in the white light of the moon, which for more than a century he was wont to see in the sky at night.

Sometimes an angel of the Lord came to visit him, and before giving the message with which he was charged, ate at his table. Or, in the heat of the day, the Lord Himself, in the garb of a pilgrim, came and sat down with the old man in the shadow of the tent where they talked with each other, face to face, like two old friends who come together to discuss their affairs. The head of the tribe, master of the servants, became a servant in his turn, listened to the commands and counsels and promises and prophecies of his divine master. And between Jehovah and Abraham was signed the Third Covenant, more solemn than the other two.

The son of a patriarch, sold by his brothers as a slave, rises to power in Egypt, and calls his race to him. The Jews think that they have found a fatherland and grow great in numbers and riches. But they allow themselves to be seduced by the gods of Egypt, and Jehovah prepares the third punishment. The envious Egyptians reduce them to abject slavery. That the punishment may be longer, Jehovah hardens the heart of Pharaoh, but finally raises up the second Saviour, who leads them forth from their sufferings and from the mud of Egypt.

Their trials are not yet finished: for forty years they wander in the desert. A pillar of cloud guides them by day and a pillar of fire by night. God has assured them a Land of Promise, with rich grazing lands, well-watered, shaded by grape-vines and olives. But in the meantime they have neither water to drink nor bread to eat, and they yearn for the flesh-pots of Egypt. God brings water gushing from a rock; and manna and quails fall from heaven; but tired and uneasy, the Jews betray their God, make a calf of gold and worship it. Moses, saddened like all prophets, misunderstood like all saviours, followed unwillingly like all discoverers of new lands, falls back of the restive and rebellious crowd and begs God to let him lie down forever. But at any cost, Jehovah desires to sign the

Fourth Covenant with His people. Moses goes down from the smoke-capped thundering mountain, with the two tables of stone whereon the very finger of God has written the Ten Commandments.

Moses is not to see the Promised Land, the new Paradise to be reconquered in place of the lost Paradise. But the divine pledge is kept: Joshua and the other heroes cross the Jordan, enter into the land of Canaan, and conquer the people; the cities fall at the breath of their trumpets; Deborah can sing her song of triumph. The people carry with them the God of battles, hidden behind the tents, on a cart drawn by oxen. But the enemies are numerous and have no mind to give way to the newcomers. The Jews wander here and there, shepherds and brigands, victorious when they maintain the covenants of the Law, defeated when they forget them.

A giant with unshorn hair kills, single-handed, thousands of Philistines and Amalekites, but a woman betrays him; enemies blind him and set him to turn a mill. Heroes alone are not enough. Kings are needed. A young man of the tribe of Benjamin, tall and well-grown, while looking for his father's strayed asses, is met by a Prophet who anoints him with the sacred oil, and makes him king of all the people. Saul becomes a powerful warrior, overcomes the Ammonites and Amalekites and founds a military kingdom, dreaded by neighboring tribes. But the same prophet who made him king, now aroused against him, raises up a rival. David, the boy shepherd, kills the king's giant foe, tempers with his harp the black rages of the king, is loved by the king's oldest son, marries the daughter of the king, is among the king's captains. But Saul, suspicious and unbalanced, wishes to kill him. David hides himself in the caves of the mountains, becomes a robber chief. He goes into the service of the Philistines, and when they conquer and kill Saul on the hills of Gilboa, he becomes in his turn king of all Israel. The bold sheep-tender, great as poet and as king, yet cruel and lustful, founds his house in Jerusalem, and with the aid of his gibborim, or body-guard, overcomes and subjugates the surrounding kingdoms. For the first time, the Jew is feared: for centuries after this he was to long for the return of David, and to hope for a descendant of David to save him from his abject subjugation.

David is the King of the sword and of song. Solomon is the King of gold and of wisdom. Gold is brought to him as a tribute: he decks with gold the first sumptuous house of Jehovah. He sends ships to faraway Ophir in search of gold; the Queen of Sheba lays down sacks of gold at his feet. But all the splendor of gold and the wisdom of Solomon are not enough to save the king from impurity and his kingdom from ruin. He takes strange women to wife and worships strange gods. The Lord pardons his old age, in memory of his youth, but at his death the kingdom is divided and the dark and shameful centuries of the decadence begin. Plots in the palace, murders of kings, revolts of chiefs, wretched civil wars, periods of idol-worship followed by passing reforms, fill the period of the separation. Prophets appear and admonish, but the kings turn a deaf ear or drive them away. The enemies of Israel grow more powerful. The Phœnicians, the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, one after another, invade the two kingdoms, extort tribute and finally, about 600 years before the birth of Jesus, Jerusalem is destroyed, the temple of Jehovah is demolished and the Jews are led as slaves to the rivers of Babylon. The cup of their infidelity and of their sins runs over and the same God who liberated them from the slavery of the Egyptians gives them over as slaves to the Babylonians. This is the fourth punishment and the most terrible of all because it is to have no end. From that time on, the Jews were always to be dispersed among strangers and subject to foreigners. Some of them were to return to reconstruct Jerusalem and its temple, but the country, invaded by the Scythians, tributary to the Persians, conquered by the Greeks, was after the last attempt of the Maccabeans finally given over to the hands of a dynasty of Arab barbarians, subject to the Romans.

This race, which for so many years lived rich and free in the desert, and for a day was master of kingdoms and believed itself, under the protection of its God, the first people of the earth, was now reduced in numbers, spurned and commanded by foreigners, was the laughing-stock of the nations, the Job among peoples. After the death of Jesus, its fate was to be harder yet: Jerusalem destroyed for the second time: in the devastated province only Greeks and Romans holding sway, and the last fragments of Israel scattered over the earth like dust of the street driven before the sirocco.

Never were people so loved nor so dreadfully chastised by their God. Chosen to be the first, they were the servants of the last. Aspiring to have a victorious country of their own, they were exiles and slaves in other men's lands.

Although more pastoral than warlike, they never were at peace either with themselves or with others. They fought with their neighbors, with their guests, with their leaders. They fought with their prophets and with their God Himself.

Breeding-ground of corruption, governed by men guilty of homicide, treachery, adultery, incest, robbery, simony and idolatry, yet their women gave birth to the most perfect saints of the Orient, upright, admonishing, solitary prophets; and finally from this race was born the Father of the new saints, He who had been awaited by all the Prophets.

This people which created no metaphysics nor science, nor music, nor sculpture, nor art, nor architecture of its own, wrote the grandest poetry of antiquity, glowing with sublimity in the Psalms and in the Prophets, inimitably tender in the stories of Joseph and Ruth, burning with voluptuous passion in the Song of Songs.

Grown up in the midst of the cults of local rustic gods, they conceived the love of God, the one universal Father. Rich in gold and lands, they could boast in their prophets of the first defenders of the poor, and they conceived of the negation of riches. The same people who had cut the throat of human victims on their altars, and massacred whole cities of guiltless people, gave disciples to Him who preached love for our enemies. This people, jealous of their jealous God, always betrayed Him to run after other gods. Of their temple, three times built and three times destroyed, nothing remains but a piece of a wall, barely enough so that a line of mourners may lean their heads against it to hide their tears.

But this perplexing and contradictory people, superhuman and wretched, the first and the last of all, the happiest and the most unhappy of all, although it serves other nations, still dominates other nations with its money and with its Bible. Although without a country of its own for centuries, it is among the owners of all countries. Although it crucified its greatest Son with His blood, it divided the history of the world into two parts: and the progeny of those god-killers has become the most infamous but the most sacred of all the peoples.

THE PROPHETS

Never was a people so warned as were the Jews, from the beginning of the temporal kingdom to its dismemberment: in the great days of the victorious Kings, in the sorrowful days of exile, in the evil days of slavery, in the tragic days of the dispersion.

India has its ascetics, who hide themselves in the wilderness to conquer the body and drown the soul in the infinite. China had its familiar sages, peaceful grandfathers who taught civic morality to working people and emperors. Greece had her philosophers, who in their shady porticos contrived harmonious systems and dialectic pitfalls. Rome had its lawgivers who recorded on bronze for the peoples and the centuries the rules of the highest justice attainable to those who command and possess. The Middle Ages had their preachers, who wore themselves out in the effort to arouse drowsy Christianity to a remembrance of the Passion and the terror of Hell. The Jewish people had the Prophets.

The Prophets did not give forth their prophecies in caves, spitting out saliva and words together from their tripods. They spoke of the future, but not merely of the future. They foretold things not yet happened, but they also brought to mind the past. They possessed time in its three phases; deciphering the past, illuminating the present and threatening the future.

The Jewish Prophet is a voice speaking, or a hand writing, a voice speaking in the palace of the King or in the caves of the mountains, on the steps of the Temple and in the precincts of the capitol. He is a voice that prays, a prayer that threatens, a threat that breaks out into divine hope. His heart is afflicted, his mouth is full of bitterness, his arm is raised, pointing out punishment to come; he suffers for his people; because he loves his people, he vituperates them: he punishes them that they may be purified; and after massacres and flames, he teaches the resurrection and the life, triumph and blessedness, the reign of the new David and the Covenant not to be broken.

The Prophet leads the idolater back to the true God, reminds the perjurer of his oath, recalls charity to the oppressor, purity to the corrupt, mercy to the fierce, justice to kings, obedience to rebels, punishment to sinners, humbleness to the proud. He goes before the king and reproaches him, he goes down among the dregs of the people and scourges them: he greets priests with blame; presents himself to the rich and brings them to confusion. He announces consolation to the poor, recompense to the afflicted, health to the sick, liberation to enslaved peoples, the coming of the conqueror to the humiliated nation.

He is not a king, nor a prince, nor a priest, nor a scribe: he is only a man, a poor, unarmed man, without investitures and without followers. He is a solitary voice, a lamenting voice grieving, a puissant voice howling and calling down shame, a voice which calls to repentance and promises eternity.

The Prophet is not a philosopher; it matters little to him whether the world be made of water or of fire, if water and fire cannot purify men's souls.

He is a poet, but without will or consciousness that he is, when the fullness of his indignation and the splendor of his vision create powerful images which rhetoricians never could invent. He is not a priest, for he has never been anointed in the temple by the mercenary guardians of the Book; he is not a King, for he does not command armed men, and as sword has only the Word which comes from on high; he is not a soldier, but he is ready to die for his God and his people.

The prophet is a voice speaking in the name of God; a hand writing at God's dictation; he is a messenger sent by God to warn those wandering from the right path, who have forgotten the Covenant. He is the secretary, the interpreter, and the delegate of God, and thus superior to the King who does not obey God, superior to the priest who does not understand God, to the people who have deserted God to run after idols of wood and stone!

The Prophet is the man who sees with a troubled heart but with clear eyes the evil which reigns to-day, the punishment which will come to-morrow, and the kingdom of happiness which will follow punishment and repentance.

He speaks in the name of the mute, he is a hand for him who cannot write, a defender for the people scattered and oppressed, an advocate for the poor, an avenger for the humble who cry out under the heel of the powerful. He is not on the side of those who tyrannize, but of those who are trodden under foot. He does not seek out the satiated and the greedy, but the hungry and the wretched.

A troublesome importunate and inopportune voice, hated by the great, out of favor with the crowd, not always understood even by his disciples. Like a hyena scenting from far the stench of carrion, like a raven always croaking out the same cry, like a hungry wolf howling on the mountain top, the prophet goes up and down the streets of Israel followed by suspicion and malediction. Only the poor and the oppressed bless him; but the poor are weak and the oppressed can only listen in silence. Like all loud truthtellers, who disturb the slumbering majority, who unsettle the sordid peace of the masters, he is avoided like a leper, persecuted like an enemy. Kings can barely tolerate him, priests regard him as an enemy, the rich detest him.

Elijah is forced to flee before the wrath of Jezebel, slayer of prophets; Amos is banished beyond Israel by Amaziah, priest of Bethel; Isaiah is killed by the order of Manesseh; Urijah cut down by King Jehoiakim; Zacharias stoned between the temple and the altar; Jonah thrown into the sea; the sword is prepared for the neck of John, and the cross is ready from which Jesus will hang. The Prophet is an accuser, but men are not willing to admit that they are guilty. He is an intercessor, but the blind are not willing to be guided by the enlightened. He is an announcer, but the deaf do not hear his promises. He is a saviour, but men rotting in fatal diseases delight in their maladies and refuse to be cured. Yet the word of the Prophets shall be the eternal testimony in favor of this race which exterminated them but was capable of generating them. And the death of a prophet, who is more than all the prophets, shall suffice to expiate the crimes of all the other peoples who grub about in the dirt of the earth.

HE WHO WILL COME

In the house at Nazareth Jesus meditates on the Commandments of the Law, and in the fiery laments of the Prophets He recognizes His destiny. The promises are insistent like knocking on obstinately closed doors. They are repeated, reiterated, never denied, always confirmed. Precise, minute with irrefutable testimony, they foretell the story. When Jesus at the beginning of His thirtieth year presents Himself to men as the Son of Man, He knows what awaits Him, even to the last: His life to come is already set down day by day in pages written before His earthly birth.

He knows that God promised Moses a new prophet, "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." God will make a new covenant with His people. "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers . . . but I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts. . . . I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." A covenant inscribed upon souls and not upon stone; a covenant of forgiveness and not of punishment!

The Messiah will have a precursor to announce Him. "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me."

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." But the people will be blind to

Him and will not listen to Him: "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes: lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert, and be healed."

"And he shall be a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

He will not magnify and flaunt Himself: He will not come in proud triumph, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout O daughter of Jerusalem, behold thy King cometh unto thee: he is just and having salvation, lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass."

He will bring justice and will lift up the unhappy; ". . . because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; . . . to comfort all that mourn." "The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. For the terrible one is brought to naught, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off."

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing."

"I, the Lord, have called thee in righteousness . . . to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness from the prison-house."

But He will be vilified and tortured by the very people He comes to save: "he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised and we esteemed him not.

"Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth . . . for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

He will not draw back before the vilest insults. "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."

All will be against Him in the supreme moment. "They have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause. For my love they are my adversaries."

The son cries to the Father:

"Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonor: mine adversaries are all before thee.

"Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.

"They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

They pierce Him with nails and divide His clothes among themselves.

"For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

". . . they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."

Too late they will understand what they have done and will repent.

". . . and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born."

"Yea, all kings shall bow down before him: all nations shall serve him.

"For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy."

"The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet."

"For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.

"And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

"Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side."

"Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run into thee because of the Lord thy God."

These and other words are remembered by Jesus in the vigil before His departure. He foresees it all and does not turn away from it. From now on He knows His fate, the ingratitude of heart, the deafness of His friends, the hatred of the powerful, the scourgings, the spittings, insults, scoffings, obloquy, piercing of the hands and feet, tortures and death. He knows that the Jews, carnal-minded materialists embittered by humiliation, full of rancor and evil thoughts, are not awaiting a poor, gentle, despised Messiah. They all, except a few of clear and prophetic vision, are dreaming of a terrestrial Messiah, an armed King, a second David, a warrior who will shed real blood, the red blood of enemies, who will rebuild more splendidly than ever the palace of Solomon and the Temple. All the kings will bring tribute to Him, not tribute of love and reverence, but of massy gold and silver coin. This earthly King will revenge Himself on the enemies of Israel, on those who make Israel suffer, who hold the people of Israel in slavery. The slaves will be masters and the masters slaves, and all the countries of the world will have their capital at Jerusalem and crowned kings will kneel before the throne of the new king of Israel. The fields of Israel will be more fertile than all the others, their pastures richer, their flocks will multiply endlessly, wheat and barley will be harvested twice a year, the ears of wheat will be heavier than in the past, and two men will bend under the weight of a single bunch of grapes. There will not be enough wine-skins to contain the vintage nor enough jars to hold all the oil, and honey will be found in the hollows of the trees and in the hedges of the roads. The branches of the trees will break under the weight of the fruit, and the fruit will be pulpy and sweet as it never was before.

This is the Messiah expected by the Jews who surround Jesus. He knows He cannot give them what they seek, that He cannot be the victorious warrior and the proud king towering up among subject kings. He knows that His kingdom is not of this earth and that He will be able to offer only a little bread, all His blood and all His love. They will not believe in Him, will torture Him and will kill Him as a false pretender. He knows all that. He knows it as if He had seen it with His eyes and endured it with His body and soul. But He knows that the seed of His word thrown into the earth among thistles and thorns, trampled under foot by assassins, will start into life when spring comes. At first beaten down by the wind, little by little it will grow, until finally it becomes a tree stretching its branches up to the sky, covering the earth with the boughs. And all men can sit round about it, remembering the death of Him who planted it.

THE PROPHET OF FIRE

While Jesus, in the poor little work-shop at Nazareth, was handling the ax and the square, a voice was raised in the desert towards Jordan and the Dead Sea. Last of the Prophets, John the Baptist called the Jews to repent, announced the approach of the Kingdom of Heaven, predicted the coming of the Messiah, reproved the sinners who came to him, and plunged them into the water of the river, that this outer washing might be the beginning of an inner purification.

In that dark age of the Herods, old Judea profaned by the Idumean usurpers, contaminated by Greek infiltration, scorned by the Roman soldiery; without King, without unity, without glory; already half dispersed throughout the world; betrayed by their own priests; always remembering the grandeur of their earthly kingdom of a thousand years ago; always obstinately hoping for a great vengeance, for a miraculous resurrection, for a return of victory in a triumph of its God, in the coming of a Saviour, of a liberator, of an anointed one who should reign in a new Jerusalem stronger and more beautiful than that of Solomon, and from Jerusalem dominate all the peoples, overcome all other monarchs, conquer all empires and bring happiness to its nation and to all men,—old Judea hating its masters, robbed by the publicans, plagued by the mercenary scribes and by the hypocritical Pharisees, old Judea divided, humiliated, plundered and yet in spite of all its shame full of faith for the future, willingly lent an ear to the voice of the desert, and hastened to the banks of the Jordan.

John's figure was one to conquer the imagination. A child sprung by a miracle from parents of great age, he was set apart from his birth to be Nazir—pure. He had never cut his hair, had never tasted wine or cider, had never touched a woman nor known any love except that for God. While he was still young, he had left his parents' home and buried himself in the desert. There he lived for many years alone, without a house, without a tent, without servants, with nothing of his own except what he had on his back. Wrapped in his camel's skin, his flanks girt by a leather belt, tall, bony, baked by the sun, his chest hairy, his hair hanging long on his shoulders, his long beard almost covering his face, his piercing eyes flashed like lightning from under his busy eyebrows when from his mouth hidden by his beard burst out the tremendous words of his maledictions.

This hypnotic wild man, solitary as a Yogi, despising pleasure like a stoic, seemed to those whom he baptized the last hope of a despairing people.

Jesus heard the people talk of those "washed ones" who returned from Jordan and took up their former lives, as in the morning a garment is resumed which was thrown away with relief the evening before; and He understood that His day grew near. He was now in His thirtieth year, the right and destined age. Before he is thirty, a man is only a sketch, an approximation, dominated by the common sentiments and common loves of all. He does not know men well, and hence cannot love them with that love, sweet with compassion, with which they should be loved. And without knowing them or knowing how to love them, he cannot speak with authority, cannot make himself heard, has not the power of saving them.

THE FIRST ANNUNCIATION

The desert sun burned John's body and his fiery longing for the Kingdom burned like a flame in his soul. He was the foreteller of fire. He saw in the Messiah, soon to appear, the master of flame. The New King will be a fierce husbandman. Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. He will thoroughly purge His floor and gather His wheat into the garner, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. He will be a baptizer who will baptize with fire.

Rigid, wrathful, harsh, shaggy, quick to insult, impatient and impetuous, John was not gentle with those who came to him. He took no satisfaction in having drawn them to take this first step towards repentance. When Pharisees and Sadducees, notable men, learned in the Scriptures, esteemed by the crowd, of authority in the temple came to be baptized, he shamed them more than the others. "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham for our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

You who lock yourselves up into houses of stone as vipers hide themselves under the rocks, you Pharisees and Sadducees, are harder than stone: your minds are petrified in the letter and the rites of the law: your selfish hearts are stony: to the hungry who ask bread of you, you give a stone, and you throw the stone at him who has sinned less than you. You Pharisees and Sadducees, you are haughty statues of stone which only fire can conquer, since water poured over you is quickly dried up. But God, who from a handful of earth made Adam, could make from stones from the shore, with rocks from the cliff, other men, other living beings, other sons for Himself. He could change granite into flesh and soul, while you have changed soul and flesh into granite. It is not enough therefore to bathe in the Jordan. That ablution is holy and salutary. Change your life, do the opposite of what you have done until now, if you do not wish to be burned up by Him, who will baptize by fire. "And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none, and he that hath meat, let him do likewise."

"Then came also publicans to be baptized and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.

"And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages."

Compelling, almost superhuman when he announced the terrible separation of the good from the bad, John becomes commonplace when he descends to particulars and falls, one might say, exactly into the Pharisean tradition. His only advice is to give alms, to give away the superfluous. From the publicans he asks only strict justice: let them take what has been allotted and nothing more. To the fierce, thieving tribe of soldiers, he recommends only discretion! "Be satisfied with your pay and do not rob." This is nothing more or less than the Mosaic law. Long before him, Amos and Isaiah had gone further.

Now is the time for the accuser of the Dead Sea to give way to the liberator of the Sea of Tiberias. The lot of precursors is hard: they know, but are not permitted to see; they arrive on the banks of the Jordan, but do not enjoy the promised land; they make plain the path for him who comes after them, but will pass beyond them. They prepare the throne and do not seat themselves on it. They are servants of the master whom often they do not meet face to face. Perhaps the fierceness of John is justified by this consciousness of being an ambassador and nothing more. A consciousness which is never envious, but which leaves a tinge of sadness, even in his humility. They came from Jerusalem to ask him who he was, "What then? Art thou Elias?"

"No. I am not."

"Art thou that Prophet?"

"And he answered, No."

"Art thou the Christ?"

"No. . . . He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. . . . He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."

At Nazareth, in the meantime, an unknown working man was lacing up His shoes with His own hands to go out to the wilderness, resounding with the voice which three times had thundered, "No."

THE VIGIL

John called sinners to wash in the river before repenting. Jesus presented Himself to John to be baptized. Did He then acknowledge Himself a sinner?

The texts are explicit: the prophet preached the baptism of repentance in remission of sins. He who went to him acknowledged himself a sinner; he who goes to wash, feels himself polluted.

The fact that we know nothing of the life of Jesus from His twelfth to His thirtieth year, exactly the years of fallible adolescence, of hot-blooded youth, has given rise to the idea that He was in that period, or at least held Himself to have been, a sinner like other men. The three remaining years of His life are the most brightly lighted by the words of the four Gospels because in thinking of the dead, what we most vividly remember are their words and deeds during the last days of their lives. Nothing of what we know of those three years gives any indication of this supposed existence of sin in Christ's life between the innocence of its beginning and the glory of its ending.

There is not even the appearance of a conversion in Christ's life. His first words have the same accent as the last. The spring from which they run is clear from the first day; there is no muddy sediment of evil. He begins with frank absolute certainty, with the recognizable authority of purity. You can feel that He has left nothing turbid back of Him. His voice is clear and limpid, a melodious song not roughened by the sour lees of voluptuous pleasure, or by the hoarseness of repentance. The transparent serenity of His look, of His smile and of His thought is not the calm which comes after the clouds of the tempest, or the uncertain whiteness of the dawn which slowly conquers the malign shadow of the night: it is the clearness of Him who was born only once, and remained a youth even into His maturity: the limpidity, the transparency, the tranquillity, the peace of a day which ends in night, but is not darkened until evening: eternal day, childhood intact and untarnished until death.

He goes about among the impure with the natural simplicity of the poor among sinners, with the natural strength of the sound man among the sick, with the natural boldness of health. On the other hand, the man who has been converted is always at the back of his mind a little troubled. A single drop of bitterness, a light shadow of impurity, a fleeting suggestion of temptation is enough to drive him back into anguish. He always feels a doubt that he may not have rid himself wholly of the old Adam, that he may not have wholly destroyed but only stunned the Other, who lived in his body. He has paid so much for his salvation, and it seems to him so precious but so frail, that he is always afraid of putting it into jeopardy or of losing it. He does not shun sinners, but he approaches them with an involuntary shudder, with a scarcely confessed fear of fresh contagion, a dread lest the sight of the vileness where he also took delight will renew unbearably the recollection of his shame, will drive him to despair of his ultimate salvation. When a servant becomes a master he is never on familiar terms with his servants. When a poor man becomes rich he is not generous with the poor. A converted sinner is not always a friend of sinners. That remnant of pride which sticks fast in the hearts even of saints mingles with his compassion. Why do sinners not do what he has done? The way is open to all, even to the wickedest, the most hardened: the prize is great, why do they remain down there, plunged in black Hell?

And when the converted sinner speaks to his brothers to convert them, he cannot refrain from dwelling on his own experience, his fall, his liberation. It may be only that he wishes to be helpful, rather than to vaunt himself, but in any case he is always eager to point to himself as a living and present example of the sweetness of salvation.

The past can be renounced, but not destroyed. It reveals itself almost unconsciously in the very men who begin life with a second birth of repentance. In the story of Jesus no sign of a different way of life before conversion ever shows itself in any allusion or in any implicit meaning, is not recognizable in the smallest of His acts, in the most obscure of His words. His love for sinners has nothing of the feverish obstinacy of the proselytizing penitent. It is a natural love, not a dutiful love. It is brotherly love without any implications of reproach, spontaneous friendly fraternity needing to make no effort to overcome repugnance. It is the attraction towards the impure of the pure who has no fear of being soiled and knows that He can cleanse—disinterested love—love felt by the saints in the supreme moments of their holiness—love beside which all other love seems vulgar—such love as no man saw before Jesus! Love which is rarely found again, and only in memory and in imitation of His love—love which will always be called Christian, and by any other name—never! Divine love—Christ's love! Love!

Jesus came among the sinners, but He was no sinner. He came to bathe in the water running before John, but He had no inner stain. The soul of Jesus was that of a child, so childlike as to outdo sages in wisdom and saints in sanctity.

He was no rigorous Puritan. He never felt the terror of the morally shipwrecked man barely saved from destruction. He was no overscrupulous Pharisee. He knew what was sin and what was right and He did not lose the spirit in the labyrinth of the letter. He knew life; He did not refuse life which though not a good in itself is a prerequisite condition of all good things. Eating and drinking are not wrong, nor looking at people, nor sending a friendly look to the thief lurking in the shade, nor to the woman who has colored her lips to hide the traces of unasked kisses.

THE BAPTISM

And yet Jesus came in the midst of a crowd of sinners to immerse Himself in the Jordan. The problem is not mysterious for him who sees something beyond the most familiar meaning in the rite reinstituted by John. The case of Jesus is unique. The baptism of Jesus is like others superficially, but is justified in other ways. Baptism is not only a washing of the flesh as a symbol of the will to cleanse the soul, a remnant of the primitive analogy of water which washed away material stains and can wash away spiritual stains. This physical metaphor is useful to the symbolism of the crowd, is a necessary ceremony for the carnal eye of the many who need a material help to believe in the immaterial. But it was not made for Jesus.

He went to John that the prophecy of the precursor might be fulfilled. His kneeling down before the prophet of fire was a recognition of John's quality of true announcer, of his worth as a loyal ambassador who has done his duty who can say now that his work is finished. Jesus submitting Himself to this symbolical investiture really invests John with the legitimate title of precursor.

Jesus, about to begin a new epoch of His life, His true life, bore witness by His immersion in water to His willingness to die, but at the same time to His certainty that He would rise again. He did not go down to the Jordan to cleanse Himself, but to show that His second life was beginning and that He will not die, but only seem to die, just as He only seemed to be purified by the waters of the Jordan.

THE DESERT

As soon as Jesus emerged from the water He went into the desert. From the multitude to solitude! Until then He had lived among the waters and the fields of Galilee and in the green meadows along the Jordan. Now He went up on the rocky mountains whence no springs arise, where no seed sprouts, where the only living creatures are snakes. Until then He had lived among the working men of Nazareth, among John's penitents; now He goes up on the solitary mountains where no human face is seen, where no human voice is heard. The New Man puts the desert between himself and humanity.

The person who says, "woe to the solitary!" only gives the measure of his own cowardice. Society is a sacrifice, meritorious in proportion to its hardness. For those rich in soul, solitude is a prize and not an expiation, a period of sure value, a time when inner beauty is created, a reconciliation with the absent. Only in solitude do we live with our peers, with those solitary souls who think the great-hearted thoughts which console us in the absence of other consolations.

The people who cannot endure solitude are the mediocre and the mean. They have nothing to offer, they are afraid of themselves, of their own emptiness. They are condemned to the eternal solitude of their own minds, a desolate inner desert where the poisonous plants of waste lands are the only things to grow. They are restless, unquiet, dejected when they cannot forget themselves in others, deafen themselves with the words of others. They delude themselves with the factitious life of others who are in their turn deluded by it. They cannot live without mingling, a passive atom, in the streams which overflow every morning from the sewers of the cities.

Jesus lived among men and He was to return among men because He loved them. But in the years to come He often hid Himself, to be alone, far even from His disciples. To love men, you need from time to time to depart from them: far from them, we draw near to them. The small soul remembers only the evil they have done him. His night is restless with bitterness and his mouth poisoned with anger. The great soul remembers benefits alone, and thankful for a few good deeds, forgets the great evils he has endured. Even those which were not pardoned at the moment are blotted out from his heart, and having renewed his original love for his brothers, he goes back to men.

For Jesus these forty days of solitude are the last of His preparation. For forty years the Jewish people (prophetic symbol of Christ) wandered in the desert before entering into the kingdom promised by God. For forty days Moses remained close to God to hear His laws; for forty days Elijah wandered in the desert fleeing the vengeance of the wicked queen.

So also the time allotted to the new liberator before announcing the promised kingdom was forty days of close communion with God to receive the supreme inspiration. But even in the desert He was not to be entirely alone: about Him throughout the vigil will be animals and angels; beings inferior to man and beings superior; those who pull man down and those who lift him up; beings all matter, beings all spirit.

Born an animal, man struggles to become an angel. He is matter changing by slow transmutation into spirit. If the animal gets the upper hand, man descends below the level of the beasts because he puts the remnants of his intelligence at the service of bestiality: if the angel conquers, man becomes the equal of angels, and instead of being a mere soldier in the army of God, partakes of divinity itself. But the fallen angel condemned to wear the form of a beast is the astute and tenacious enemy of all men who wish to climb that height from which he was cast down. Jesus is the enemy of the material world, of the bestial life of the many. He was born into the world in order that beasts should become men, and men become angels. He was born to change the world and to conquer it, to fight with the king of the world, that enemy of God and of men, the malign, the suborner, the seducer. He was born to drive Satan from the earth as His father drove him from Heaven.

Therefore at the end of the forty days, Satan came into the desert to tempt his enemy.

THE ADVERSARY

Our slavery to matter is branded on our lives by the daily need of our bodies for food, and Jesus wished to conquer our slavery to matter. Whenever He shared human lives, He consented to eat and drink, because His friends did, because it is right to give to the flesh that which belongs to the flesh, and finally as a visible protest against the hypocritical fasts of the Pharisees. The last act of His earthly mission was a supper, but the first after His baptism was a fast. Alone where His abstinence could not shame His simple-hearted companions, where it could not be confused with ostentatious piety, He forgot to eat.

But after forty days He was hungry. Satan, tenacious and invisible, was waiting for this moment of material need, and seized on it. The Adversary spoke: "If thou be the Son of God command this stone that it be made bread."

The reproof was prompt: "It is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."

Satan did not admit a defeat, and from the top of a mountain showed Him all the kingdoms of the earth: "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt adore me, all shall be thine."

And Jesus answered, "Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Then Satan took Him to Jerusalem and set Him on the pinnacle of the Temple, "If thou be the Son of God cast thyself down from hence."

But Jesus answered quickly: "It is written; thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

"And when the Devil had completed every temptation," Luke goes on, "he departed from him for a season." We shall see his return and his last effort.

This dialogue seems at first sight only a bandying about of Scriptural texts. Satan and Jesus do not use their own words, but compete by means of quotations from the Scriptures. We seem to be listening to a theological dispute; but as a matter of fact it is the first Parable of the Gospels acted out and not put into words.

It is not surprising that Satan should have come with the absurd hope of causing Jesus to fall. It is not surprising that Jesus since He was a man should have undergone temptation. Satan only tempts the great and pure. To the others he does not need even to murmur a word of invitation. They are already his, from their childhood on. He need give himself no trouble to win their allegiance, they are in his arms before he summons them And yet many of them do not know that he exists. He never has presented himself to them because they obey him from a distance. Thus, not having known him, they are ready to deny him. The devil's cohorts do not believe in the devil. It was said of old that the devil's shrewdest ruse was to spread abroad the rumor of his death. He takes all forms, so beautiful sometimes that no one recognizes him. The Greeks, for instance, marvels of intelligence and elegance, had no place for Satan in their mythology, because all their Gods, when closely examined, show the horns of Satan under their crowns of laurel and grape leaves. Satanical is tyrannical and lustful Jove, adulterous Venus, Apollo the flayer, murderous Mars, drunken Dionysius. They were so astute, the gods of Greece, that they gave the people love-po-tions and distilled perfumes to keep them from detecting the stench of the evil that consumes the world.

But if many do not know him and laugh at him as at a specter invented in church for the needs of penitents, there are some who cry out upon those who know him but do not follow him. He seduced the innocence of the first two created beings, he suborned David the strong, corrupted Solomon the wise, accused Job the righteous before the throne of God. Satan tempts and always will tempt all the saints who hide themselves in the desert, all those who love God. The more we go away from him the closer he is; the higher we are, the more he rages to bring us low; he can soil only that which is clean and he gives no care to the filth which spontaneously ferments under the hot breath of animality. To be tempted by Satan is a proof of purity, a sign of greatness, and shows a man that he is on the upward path. He who has known Satan and has seen him face to face, may well have hope for himself. More than any other, Jesus merited this consecration. Satan challenged Him twice and tempted Him once. He asked Him to transform dead matter into matter that gives life and to cast Himself down from a height so that God by saving Him should proclaim Him as His true son. He offered Him the possession and the glory of earthly kingdoms on condition that instead of serving God Jesus should promise to serve the Demon. He asks material bread and a material miracle of Him and promises Him material power. Jesus does not take up the challenge and refuses what is offered.

He is not the fleshly, temporal Messiah, desired by the Jewish crowd, the material Messiah such as the Tempter in his baseness imagines Him. He did not come to bring food to bodies but food to souls,—truth, that living food. When His brothers, far from home, lack bread enough for their hunger, He will break the few loaves which His disciples bring and all will have enough and they will fill baskets with the remnants. But except in cases of necessity He will not be the distributor of that bread which comes from the earth and returns to earth. If He should change the stones of the street into bread, every one would follow Him through love of his own body and would pretend to believe everything He said. Even the dogs would come to His banquet. But this He does not wish. Those who follow Him must believe in His word in spite of hunger, grief and poverty. Thus those who wish to follow Him must leave behind them fertile fields, they must leave behind them money which can be changed into bread. They must go with Him without knapsack or payment, with one garment, and live like the birds of the air, husking ears of grain in the fields, or begging alms at house doors. One can live without terrestrial bread: a fig left on the tree among the leaves, a fish drawn from the lake can take the place of bread. But no man can live without heavenly bread, if he wishes to escape eternal death, which is the portion of those who have never tasted it. Man does not live by bread alone, but by love, fervor, and truth. Jesus is ready to transform the Kingdom of Earth into the Kingdom of Heaven, furious bestiality into happy sanctity, but He does not deign to transform stones into bread, matter into other matter.

For similar reasons Jesus refused the other challenge. Men love the wonderful, the visibly wonderful, the prodigy, the physical impossibility made possible before their eyes. They hunger and thirst after portents. They are ready to prostrate themselves before the wonder-worker even if he is an evil man or a charlatan. From Jesus they all asked for a Sign, meaning by that, a gigantic juggling feat; but He always refused. He did not wish to persuade by means of the miraculous. He consented to cure the sick—especially those sick in spirit and sinners—but He often avoided the occasion even for these miracles, and He begged those cured not to speak the name of their healer. And He never used this power for His own safety, not even at Gethsemane when Satan tempted Him to put away the cup of death from His lips, nor when He was nailed to the cross and Satan repeated his challenge by the mouth of the Jews. "If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross and save thyself." In the night of His vigil and in the high noon of His death, He resisted Satan and had recourse to no miracle to save Himself. Men must believe

Him in spite of all contrary evidence, believe in His divinity even when confronted with what seems His common humanity. It is no fit deed for Jesus needlessly to throw Himself down from the Temple; to bring an end to the pain of another with the sole purpose of conquering men, and fascinating them with wonder and terror; to put God to a test, to force Him as it were, to accomplish a rash and superfluous miracle, only in order that Satan may not win the infamous wager founded on sarcasm and on arrogance. Loving, it is to human hearts He wishes to speak; sublime in character, He wishes to bring sublimity into human lives; a pure spirit, He wishes to purify other spirits; deep-hearted, to light the flame of love in others; a great spirit, to bring greatness to little, mean, neglected souls. Instead of throwing Himself like a vulgar magician from the precipice which is below the Temple, He will go up from the Temple upon the Mount to give out from on high the beatitudes of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The offer of the Kingdoms of the Earth must have been horrible to Him, and still more the price that Satan asked. Satan has the right to offer what is his. The Kingdoms of the Earth are founded on force and maintained with deceit. They are Satan's own country, they are his Paradise regained. Satan sleeps every night on the pillows of the powerful. They pay material tribute to him, and give him daily offerings in thought and deed. But Jesus could have taken away their Kingdoms from the Kings without bending knee to the Adversary. He had only to offer men bread without work. If like a juggling mountebank He had opened a public theater of popular miracles, the multitude would have acclaimed Him. Had He wished to seem the Messiah for whom the Jews had been longing during their dreary slavery, He could have corrupted them with plenty and with marvels, He could have made of every land a country of grace and enchantment and He could have occupied at once every seat of the procurators of Satan.

But Jesus does not wish to be the restorer of the fallen kingdom, the conqueror of hostile empires. Authority is of little importance to Him and glory still less. The Kingdom which

He announces and prepares has nothing in common with the Kingdoms of the Earth. His Kingdom is destined rather to bring to naught the Kingdoms of the Earth. The Kingdom of Heaven is in us. Any day when a soul has turned to righteousness the Kingdom of Heaven is enlarged because it has acquired a new citizen, snatched from the Kingdom of Earth. When every one is good and righteous, when all love their brothers as fathers love their sons, when even enemies love one another (if there still are enemies), when no one thinks of amassing treasure, and instead of taking away from others, every one gives bread to the hungry and clothing to those who are cold,—where on that day will be the Kingdom of the Earth? Where will be the need for soldiers when no one wishes to enlarge his own land by stealing that of his neighbor? What need will there be for Kings when every one has his law in his conscience and when there are no armies to command nor judges to select? What need will there be for money and for tribute when every one is sure of his living and satisfied with it, and there are no wages to be paid to soldiers and servants? When every one's soul is transformed, those so-called foundations of life which are named Society, Country and Justice will vanish like the hallucinations of a long night. The word of Christ needs neither money nor armies. And if it really becomes the universal life of the conscience, everything that binds and blinds men, necessary unjust power, the criminal glory of battles, will fall like morning mists before sunlight and wind. The Kingdom of Heaven within is One and it will take the place of the Kingdoms of Earth, which are many. The liberated spirit will scarcely remember despotic matter. Men will no longer be divided into Kings and subjects, masters and slaves, rich and poor, the arrogantly virtuous, the humble sinners, free and prisoners. The sun of God will shine on all, the citizens of the Kingdom will be one family of fathers and brothers and the gates of Paradise will be open again to the sons of Adam become as gods.

Jesus conquered Satan in Himself and now came out of the desert to conquer him among men.

THE RETURN

As soon as Jesus came again among men, He learned that the Tetrarch (second husband of Herodias) had imprisoned John in the fortress of Machaerus. The voice crying in the wilderness was stilled and pilgrims to the Jordan saw no more the long shadow of the wild Baptizer fall across the water.

He had done his work and was now to give way to a more powerful voice. John waited in the blackness of the prison until his bloody head was carried on a golden platter to the banquet—almost the last dish served to that evil woman, betrayer of men.

Now Jesus understands that His day is at hand, and crossing Samaria He returns into Galilee to announce at once the coming of the Kingdom. He does not go to Jerusalem, the city of the great king, the capital. Jesus comes to destroy that Jerusalem of stone and arrogance, proud on its three hills, hard of heart like the stones. The men whom Jesus comes to combat are precisely those who glory in great cities, in the capitals, in the Jerusalems of the world.

At Jerusalem live the powerful of the world, the Romans, masters of the world and of Judea, with their soldiers in arms. Jerusalem is ruled by the representatives of the Cæsars; of Tiberius, the drunken assassin, the perfidious heir of Augustus, the hypocritical voluptuary, and of Julius the adulterous spendthrift. At Jerusalem live the High Priests, the old custodians of the Temple, the Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes, the Levites and their guards, the descendants of those who pursued and killed the prophets, the petrifiers of the Law, the bigots of the letter, the haughty depositories of arid fanaticism. At Jerusalem are the treasurers of God, the treasurers of Cæsar, the guardians of the treasure, the lovers of wealth; the Publicans with their excisemen and parasites, the rich with their servants and their concubines, the merchants with their crowded shops; money bags clinking with shekels in the warmth of the bosom above the heart.

Jesus comes to combat all these. He comes to conquer the masters of the earth—the earth which belongs to all; to confound the masters of the word—the word which should be spoken freely wherever God wishes; to condemn the masters of gold, base, perishable and fatal element. He comes to overthrow the kingdom of the soldiers of Rome who oppress bodies; the kingdom of the priests of the Temple who oppress souls; the kingdom of the heapers-up of money who oppress the poor. He comes to save bodies, souls, the poor; He teaches liberty, in opposition to Rome; setting at naught the doctrines of the Temple, He teaches love; He teaches poverty against all the ideals of the rich.

He does not wish to begin His message in Jerusalem where His enemies, gathered together, are the strongest. He wishes to surround the city, take it from the outside, arrive there later with a following behind Him, when already the Kingdom of Heaven has begun slowly to lay siege to it. The Conquest of Jerusalem will be the last test, the supreme trial, the great battle, the tremendous battle between the greater than the Prophets and Jerusalem, slayer of Prophets. If He should go to Jerusalem now (where He will enter presently as a king and whence He will be buried as a criminal) He would be taken prisoner at once and would not be able to sow His word on less ungrateful, less stony soil.

Jerusalem like all capitals—great sewers to which flow the refuse, the outcasts, the rubbish of the nations—is inhabited by a mob of frivolous, elegant, idle, skeptical and indifferent people, by a ceremonious patrician class who have kept only the tradition of ritual and the sterile rancor of their decadence; by an aristocracy of property owners and speculators who belong to the herd of Mammon, and by a rebellious, restless, ignorant crowd, controlled only by the superstition of the Temple and the fear of the foreigner's sword. Jerusalem was not fit soil for the sowing of Jesus.

A man from the provinces,—therefore healthy and solitary—He goes back to His province. He wishes to carry the tidings of good news to those who were to be the first to receive Him, to the poor and the humble because the tidings are specially for them, because they have long been waiting for them, and because more than any others, they will rejoice. Jesus' coming into the world is for the poor. Therefore leaving Jerusalem, He arrives in Galilee, enters into the Synagogue and begins to teach.

THE REIGN OF GOD

The first words of Jesus are few and simple, very much like those of John, "The time is accomplished; the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the Gospel."

Bare words, incomprehensible to moderns by their very sobriety. To understand them and to understand the difference between the message of John and the message of Jesus, they need to be translated into our language, filled again with their eternally living meaning.

"The time has come!" The time for which men have been waiting, which they have prophesied and announced. John said that a King would come ready to found the new Kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven. The King has come and announces that the doors of the Kingdom are open. He is the guide, the path, the hand, before being King in all the splendor of His celestial glory.

When Jesus says "The time is accomplished," he does not refer to the exact date, to the fact that it was the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius. The time of Jesus is now and always is eternity. The moment of His appearance, the moment of His death, the moment of His return, the moment of His perfect triumph, has not yet arrived, not even yet! And yet, at every moment the time is accomplished, every hour is the fullness of time, on condition that the workers are ready. Every day is His; His era is not written down in numbers: there is no chronology in eternity. Every time a man tries to enter into the Kingdom, confirms the Kingdom by believing, enriches the Kingdom, consolidates, defends, proclaims its perpetual sanctity and its perpetual rightness in opposition to all the inferior kingdoms (inferior because they are human, not divine, earthly not heavenly) then always the time is accomplished. This time is called the epoch of Jesus, the Christian era, the New Covenant. Not quite two thousand years divides us from that time; not quite two days, because for God, and for men of understanding, a thousand years are as a day. The time is ripe; even to-day we are in the fullness of time. Jesus calls us even now. The second day has not yet expired, the foundations of the Kingdom are scarcely begun. We who live to-day, this year, in this century (and we shall not always be alive, and we shall perhaps not see the end of this year, and certainly we shall not see the end of this century), we, I say, the living, can take part in this Kingdom, enter into it, live in it, enjoy it. The Kingdom is not the worn-out fancy of a poor Jew nearly twenty centuries ago; it is not an archaism, a dead memory, a bygone frenzy. The Kingdom is of to-day, of to-morrow, of always; a reality of the future always just-realized, alive, actual, ours; a work started a short time ago, a work to which every one is free to put his hand to take it up, to carry it on. The word seems old, the message dim with antiquity repeated by the echoes of two thousand years, but the Kingdom—as a fact, true, accomplished—is new, young, born yesterday, still to grow, to flower, to prosper. Jesus threw the seed into the earth, but the seed has scarcely germinated in two thousand years passed like a stormy winter, in the space of sixty human generations. Is it perhaps possible that our own time after the flood of blood is the divine and longed-for period?

What this Kingdom is, we shall learn page by page in the words of Jesus; but we must not imagine it as a new Paradise of Delight, as a wearisome Arcady of beatitude, as an immense choir singing Hosannahs with their feet on the clouds and their heads among the stars.

Christ describes the Kingdom of God as opposed to the Kingdom of Satan, as the antithesis of the Kingdom of Earth. The Kingdom of Satan is the Kingdom of evil, of deceit, of cruelty, of pride, the Kingdom of baseness. Therefore the Kingdom of God means the Kingdom of good, of sincerity, of love, of humility, the Kingdom of the lofty.

The Kingdom of Earth is the Kingdom of matter and of flesh, the Kingdom of gold, hatred, avarice, sensuality, the Kingdom of all things loved by evil and distraught men. The

Kingdom of Heaven is to be the opposite of this: the Kingdom of the spirit and of the soul, the Kingdom of renunciation and of purity; the Kingdom of all things valued by men who know the worthlessness of everything else in comparison. God is Father and Goodness; Heaven is above the earth, hence it is the spirit. Heaven is God's home. The spirit is the dominion of goodness. All that crawls on the earth, grubs in the earth, takes pleasure in matter—that is bestiality; all that lives with upraised eyes, desiring Heaven, wishing to live forever in Heaven—that is Holiness. Most men are beasts. It is Christ's will that these beasts become saints. This is the simple and ever-living meaning of the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Kingdom of God is of men and for men. The Kingdom of Heaven is in us. Begin at once: it is our work, for our happiness in this life on this earth. It depends on our will, on our response given or withheld. Become perfect and the Kingdom will extend even on earth. The Kingdom of God will be founded among men.

It is true that Jesus added "repent," but the old word has been distorted from its true and magnificent meaning. The word of Mark—*μετανοεῖτε*—should not be translated "repent"; *μετανοια* means rather the changing of the mind, the transformation of the soul. Metamorphosis is a change of form; "metanoia," a changing of the spirit. It ought rather to be translated "conversion," that is, the renewing of the inner life of man. The idea of "repentance" is only an illustration of Christ's command.

As one of the conditions of the arrival of the Kingdom and at the same time as the very substance of the new order, Jesus demands complete conversion, a revolution of life and of the common values of life, a transmutation of feelings, of opinions, of intentions. This He called, speaking to Nicodemus, "the second birth." Little by little He was to explain in what way this total transformation of the ordinary human soul is to be effected. All His life was devoted to this teaching and to setting the example. But in the meantime, He contented Himself with adding one conclusion, "Believe in the Gospel."

By "Gospel" men nowadays mean usually the book where the quadruple story of Jesus is printed; but Jesus neither wrote books nor thought of volumes. By "Gospel" He meant, according to the plain and sweet meaning of the word, "good tidings." Jesus is a messenger (in Greek "angel") who brings good tidings: He brings the cheerful message that the sick will be cured, that the blind will see, the poor will be enriched with imperishable riches, that the sad will rejoice, that sinners will be pardoned, the unclean purified, that the imperfect can become perfect, that animals can become saints, and saints become angels, like unto God.

If this Kingdom is to come, if everybody is to prepare himself for its coming, we must believe in the message, believe that the Kingdom is possible and near. If there is no faith in this promise, no one will do what must be done to fulfill the promise. Only the certainty of the truth of this good tidings, only the conviction that the Kingdom is not the lie of an adventurer or the hallucination of an obsessed zealot; only the certainty of the sincerity and validity of the message can arouse men to put their hands to the great work of its foundation.

With those few words, obscure to the majority of men, Jesus began His teaching. The fullness of time, the need to begin at once! The coming of the Kingdom, victory of spirit over matter; of good over bad, of the saint over the beast. "Metanoia"—the total transformation of the soul. The Gospel—the cheerful assurance that all this is true and eternally possible.

CAPERNAUM

Jesus taught His Galileans on the threshold of their shabby little white houses, on the small shady open places of their cities or the shore of the lake, leaning against a beached boat, His feet on the stones, towards evening when the sun sank red in the west, summoning men to rest.

Many listened to Him and followed Him because, says Luke: "His word was with authority." The words were not wholly new, but the man was new, and new was the warmth of His voice, and the good done by that voice, overflowing from His heart and going straight to the hearts of others. The accent of those words was new, and new the sense that they took in that mouth, lighted by His look.

Here was no prophet of the mountains shouting in waste places, far from men, solitary, distant, forcing others to come to him if they wished to hear him. Here was a prophet living like a man among other men, a friend of all, friendly to the unfriended, an easy-going and companionable comrade, searching out His brothers where they work in the houses, in the busy streets, eating their bread and drinking wine at their tables, lending a hand with the fisherman's nets, with a good word for every man, for the sad, for the sick, for the beggar.

The simple-hearted, like animals and children, know instinctively who loves them, they believe him, are happy when he comes (their very faces suddenly transfigured) and are sad when he goes. Sometimes they cannot bring themselves to leave him and follow him to the death.

Jesus spent His time with them walking from one region to another, or talking, seated among His friends. Always dear to Him was the sunny shore of the lake, along the curve of quiet clear water scarcely ruffled by the wind from the desert, dotted with a few boats silently tacking back and forth. The western coast of the lake was His real Kingdom; there He found His first listeners, His first converts, His first disciples.

If He returned to Nazareth, He stayed there but a short time. He was to go back later, accompanied by the Twelve and preceded by the renown of His miracles, and they were to treat Him as all the cities of the world,—even the most renowned for amenity, Athens and Florence, have treated those of their citizens who made them great above others. After ridiculing Him (they had seen Him as a child, it is out of the question that He can have become a great prophet) they tried to cast Him down from the precipice.

In no city did He make a long stay. Jesus was a wanderer, such a man as is called a vagabond by the pot-bellied and sedentary citizen rooted to his threshold. His life is an eternal journey. Before that other Jew who was condemned to immortality by one condemned to death, He is the true Wandering Jew. He was born on a journey. Still a baby at the breast, He was carried along the sun-parched road to Egypt; from Egypt He came back to the waters and greenness of Galilee. From Nazareth He often went to Jerusalem for the Passover. The voice of John called Him to the Jordan: an inner voice drove Him out into the desert; and after the forty days of hunger and the Temptation, He began His restless vagabond life from city to city, from village to village, from mountain to mountain, across Palestine. Most often we find Him in Galilee, in Capernaum, Chorazin, in Cana, in Magdala, in Tiberias, but often He crosses Samaria to sit down near the well of Sychar. We find Him from time to time in the Tetrarchy of Philip at Bethsaida, at Gadara, at Cæsarea, also at Gerasa in the Perea of Herod Antipas. In Judah He often stops at Bethany, a few miles away from Jerusalem, or at Jericho, but He did not shrink from journeying outside the limits of the old kingdom and from going down among the Gentiles. We find Him in Phœnicia, in the regions of Tyre and Sidon, and in Syria, if the transfiguration took place on the summit of Mt. Hermon. After the resurrection He appears in Emmaus, on the banks of His lake of Tiberias and finally at Bethany near Lazarus' house, where He leaves His friends forever.

He is the traveler without rest, the wanderer with no home, the wayfarer for love's sake, the voluntary exile in His own country; He says Himself that He has not a stone on which to lay His head, and it is true that He has no bed where He may lie down at night, nor a room that He can call His own. His real home is the road which takes Him along with His first friends in search of new friends. His bed is the furrow in a field, the bench of a boat, the shadow of an olive tree. Sometimes He sleeps in the houses of those who love Him, but only for short periods.

In the early days we find Him most often at Capernaum. His journeys began there and ended there. Matthew calls it "His city." Situated on the caravan route which from Damascus crosses Iturea and goes towards the sea, Capernaum had become little by little a commercial center of some importance. Artisans, bargainers, brokers, and shopkeepers had come there to stay. Men of finance—as flies swarm on rotten pears—had come there; publicans, excise men and other fiscal tools. The little settlement, half-rustic, half a fishing village, had become a mixed and composite city where the society of the times—even to soldiers and prostitutes—was fully represented. And yet Capernaum, lying along the lake, freshened by the air from the near-by hills and by the breeze from the water, was not a prey to stagnation and decay like the Syrian cities and Jerusalem. There were still peasants who went out to their fields every day, and fishermen who every day went forth to their boats. Good, poor, simple, warm-hearted people who talked of other matters than money and gear. Among them a man could draw his breath freely.

On the Sabbath Jesus went to the Synagogue. Everybody had the right to enter there, to read aloud and also to expound what had been read. It was a plain house, a bare room where people went with their friends and brothers to reason together and dream of God.

Jesus stood up, had some one give Him one of the scrolls of the Scriptures (more often the Prophets than the Law) and recited in a tranquil voice two, three, four or more verses. Then He commenced to speak with a bold and forceful eloquence which put the Pharisees to confusion, touched sinners, won the poor, and enchanted women.

Suddenly the old text was transfigured, became transparent, belonged to their own times; it seemed a new truth, a discovery they had made, a discourse heard for the first time; the words withered by antiquity, dried up by repetition, took on life and color; a new sun gilded them one by one, syllable by syllable; fresh words coined at that moment, shining before their eyes like an unexpected revelation.

POOR PEOPLE

Nobody in Capernaum could remember having heard such a Rabbi. The Sabbaths when Jesus spoke, the Synagogue was full, the crowd overflowed out on the street, everybody was there who could come. The gardener comes, who for that day had left his spade, and no longer turned his water wheel to irrigate the green rows of his garden, and the smith, the good country smith, black with smoke and dust every day, but on the Sabbath washed, neatly dressed, his face still a little dusky, although scrubbed and rinsed in many waters like his hands, with his beard combed and anointed with cheap ointment (but still perfumed like a rich man's beard), the smith all whose days are spent before the fire, sweaty and dirty except this day which is the Sabbath, when he comes to the Synagogue to hear the ancient word of the Ancient of Days, the God of his fathers. He comes devoutly, but he comes too because his family, his friends, his neighbors come there, and he finds them all together, and he comes also because the day is long (all that long holiday without any work, without any hammer in his hand, without the pincers) and in Capernaum there is nothing to do on Sabbaths except go to the Synagogue. The mason comes, he who has worked on this little house of the Synagogue and made it small because the Elders—good, God-fearing people, but inclined to be stingy—did not wish to spend too much. The mason still feels his arms a little numb and lame from his six days' labor, no longer keeps track of the stones which he has laid in courses and the trowels full of mortar which he has thrown between the stones during the week. The mason puts on his new clothes to-day and sits down on the ground, he who on all other days stands upright, active, watchful so that the work may go well, and the employer be satisfied; the good mason too has come to the house which seems to him partly his own.

The fishermen have come too, the young and the old, both of them with faces tanned by the sun and with eyes half-shut from the constant glare of sunlight reflected by the water. (The old man is handsomer because of the contrast of his white hair and white beard with his weather-beaten and wrinkled face.) The fishermen have turned over their boats on the sand, have left them tied to a stake, have spread the nets on the roof and have come to the Synagogue, although they are not used to being within walls and perhaps continue to hear a confused murmur of water lapping about the bow.

The peasants of the neighboring countryside are here too, prosperous farmers who have put on a tunic as good as anybody's, who are satisfied with the harvest almost ready for the scythe. They do not mean to forget God who brings the grain to a head and makes the grape-vine to blossom. There are shepherds come in to town that morning, shepherds and goat-herds with the smell of their flocks still on them, shepherds who live all the week in the mountain-pastures without seeing a soul, without exchanging a word, alone with their quiet animals peacefully grazing on the new grass.

The smaller property owners, the small business men, the gentry of Capernaum, all have come. They are men of weight and piety. They stand in the front row, serious, their eyes cast down, satisfied with the business of the last few days and satisfied with their conscience because they have observed the law without failing and are not contaminated. The line of their well-clad backs can be seen, bowed backs but broad and masterful, employers' backs, backs of people in harmony with the world, and with God, backs full of authority and of religion. There are also transient foreigners, merchants going towards Syria or returning to Tiberias. They have come from condescension or from habit, perhaps to try to pick up a customer, and they stare into everybody's face with the arrogance which money gives to poverty-stricken souls.

At the back of the room (for the Synagogue is only a long white-washed room a little larger than a school, than an inn, than a kitchen) the poor of the countryside are huddled together like dogs near a door, like those who always stand in fear of being sent away. The poorest of all, those who live by odd jobs, by ungracious charity and also—oh, poverty!—by some discreet theft, the ragged, the vermin-ridden, the timid, the wretched; old widows whose children are far away, young orphans not yet able to earn a living, hump-backed old men with no acquaintances, strengthless invalids, those who are incurably sick, those whose wits no longer rightly serve them, who have no understanding, who cannot work. The weak in mind, the weak in body, the bankrupt, the rejected, the abandoned, those who one day eat and the next day do not, who never have enough to satisfy their hunger, those who pick up what others throw away, the pieces of dry bread, fish-heads, fruit-cores and skins; and sleep now here and now there, and suffer from the winter cold and every year wait for summer, paradise of the poor, for then there are fruits to be plucked along the roads. They too, the beggars, the wretched, the ragamuffins, the sickly and the weaklings, when the Sabbath comes, go to the Synagogue to hear the stories of the Bible. They cannot be sent away: they have as much right to be there as any one, they are sons of the same Father and servants of the same Lord. On that day they feel a little comforted in their poverty because they can hear the same words heard by the rich and the strong. Here they are not served with another sort of food, poorer and coarser, as happens in the houses where the owner eats the best and the beggar on the threshold must content himself with scraps. Here the fare is the same for the man of possessions and him who has nothing. The words of Moses are the same, everlastingly the same for him who owns the fattest flock and for him who has not even a quarter of lamb on Passover day. But the words of the Prophets are sweeter to them than those of Moses, harder on the great of the world, but kinder for the humble. The poverty-stricken throng at the back of the Synagogue waits every Sabbath for somebody to read a chapter from Amos or from Isaiah because the Prophets take the part of the poor, and announce the punishment and the new world. "And he who was clothed with purple shall be made to handle dung."

And behold on that Sabbath there was One who came expressly for them, who talked for them, who had come back from the desert to announce good tidings for the poor and the sick. No one had ever spoken of them as He did, no one had shown so much love for them. Like the old prophets, He had for them a special affection which offended more fortunate men, but which filled their hearts with comfort and hope.

When Jesus had finished speaking they observed that the elders, the bourgeois, the masters, lords, Pharisees, men who knew how to read and make money, shook their heads forebodingly, and got up, making wry faces and nodding among themselves, half contemptuous, half scandalized; and as soon as they were outside, muttered a grumbling of prudent disapprobation through their great black and silver beards. But no one laughed.

The merchants followed them, erect, already thinking of the next day; there remained behind the working men, the poor, the shepherds, the peasants, the gardeners, the smiths, the fishermen, and all the herd of beggars, orphans without inheritance, old men without health, homeless outcasts, friendless unfortunates, penniless men, the diseased, the maimed, the worn-out, the rejected. They could not take their eyes from Jesus, they would have liked Him to go on speaking, to reveal the day of the New Kingdom when they too would have their return for all this misery, and see with their own eyes the day of reckoning. The words of Jesus had made their bruised and weary hearts beat faster. A gleam of light, a glimpse of the sky and of glory, the hallucination of prosperity, of banquets, of repose and abundance, sprang up from those great words in the rich souls of the poor. Perhaps they scarcely understood what the Master meant to say, and perhaps the Kingdom glimpsed by them had some resemblance to a materialistic Land of Cockaigne. But no one loved Him as they did. No one will ever love Him like the poor of Galilee, hungering after peace and truth. Even those who were less destitute, the day-laborers, the fishermen, the working men, though less hungry for bread, loved Him for the love of those poor.

And when He came out from the Synagogue all those stood waiting in the street to see Him again. They followed Him timidly as if in a dream; when He entered into the house of a friend to eat they were almost jealous and some waited outside the door until He reappeared; then, grown more bold, they accosted Him and went along together beside the shores of the lake. Others joined them on the way, and now one and now another (they were braver under the open sky and outside the Synagogue) began asking questions. And Jesus paused and answered this obscure crowd with words never to be forgotten.

THE FIRST FOUR

Among the fishermen of Capernaum, Jesus found His first disciples. Almost every day He was on the beach of the lake; sometimes the boats were going out, sometimes they were coming in, the sails swelling in the breeze; and from the barks the barefooted men climbed down, wading knee-deep in water, carrying the baskets filled with the wet silver of dead fish piled together, good and bad, and with the old dripping nets.

They put out sometimes at nightfall when there was a moon, and came back early in the morning just after the setting of the moon and before sunrise. Often Jesus was waiting for them on the strand and was the first to greet them. But the fishing was not always good, sometimes they came back empty-handed, tired and depressed. Jesus greeted them with words which cheered them, and the disappointed men, although they had not slept, listened to Him willingly. One morning two boats came back towards Capernaum while Jesus standing by the lake was talking to the people who had gathered around Him. The fishermen disembarked and began to arrange the nets; then Jesus entered into one of the boats and asked them to put it out a little from the land so that He might not be pressed upon by the crowd. Upright near the rudder He taught those who had remained on the land, and when He had left speaking He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught."

And Simon, son of Jona, owner of the boat, answered, "Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing, nevertheless at thy word, I will let down the net."

When they were only a short distance from the bank, Simon and Andrew, his brother, threw out into the water a large net. And when they drew it back it was so full of fish that the meshes were almost breaking. Then the two brothers called their partners in the other boat, that they should come to help them, and they threw out the net again and drew it up again full. Simon, Andrew and the others cried out "a miracle!" and thanked Jesus, who had brought them this good luck. Simon, impulsive by nature, threw himself at the knees of their guest crying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

But Jesus, smiling, said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

When they went back to the shore they pulled the boat up on the land, and leaving their nets, the two brothers followed Him. And a few days after this, Jesus saw the other two brothers, James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon and Andrew, and he called them, while they were mending the broken nets; and they too said farewell to their father, who was in the boat with the sailors, and leaving the broken nets half-mended, followed Him. Jesus was no longer alone: four men, two pairs of brothers more deeply brothers in this common faith, were ready to accompany Him wherever He wished to go, to break bread with Him, to repeat His words, to obey Him as a father, and more than a father. Four poor fishermen, four plain men of the lake, men who did not know how to read, nor indeed how to speak correctly, four humble men whom no one else would have been able to distinguish from others, were called by Jesus to found with Him a kingdom which was to occupy all the earth. For Him they left their faithful boats which they had put out into the water so many times, and so many times tied up to the wharf; they left the old fish nets which had drawn from the water thousands of fish; they left their father, their family, their home. They left all that to follow this man who did not promise money or lands and spoke only of love, of poverty and perfection. Thus if their spirit always remained too low to understand their master, always a little rustic and common, and if sometimes they doubted and were uncertain and did not understand His truths and His parables, and at the end abandoned Him, all will be pardoned to them for the candid, unquestioning promptness with which they followed Him at the first call.

Who among us to-day, among all those now living, would be capable of imitating those four poor men of Capernaum? If a prophet should come and say to the merchant, "Leave your bank and your counter"; and to the Professor, "Come down from your chair and throw away your books"; and to the statesman, "Give up your portfolios and your lies which are only nets for catching men"; and to the working man, "Put away your tools for I will give you other work"; and to the farmer, "Stop in the middle of the furrow and leave your plow among the clods, for I promise you a more wonderful harvest"; and to the factory hand, "Stop your machine and come with me, for spirit is more precious than metal"; and to the rich, "Give away all your goods, for you will acquire with me an inestimable treasure"; . . . if a prophet should speak thus to us, men of the present day, how many would follow him with the simple-hearted spontaneity of those fishermen of old? But Jesus made no sign to the merchants who stood trafficking in the open places, and in the shops, nor to those who observed the tiniest commands of the law and could recite by heart verses from the Bible, nor to the farmers rooted to their land and their live-stock, and certainly not to the affluent, surfeited, satisfied, who care nothing about any other kingdoms because their kingdom has long since been realized.

Not by chance did Jesus select His first companions from among fishermen. The fisherman who lives a great part of his days in the pure solitude of the water is the man who knows how to wait. He is the patient, unhurried man who lets down his nets and leaves the rest to God. The water has its caprices, the lake its fantasies, no day is like another day; he does not know when he goes away if he will come back with his boat full or without a single fish to cook for his dinner. He commends himself into the hands of God, who sends abundance and famine. He consoles himself for bad days by thinking of the good days which have been and which will come. He does not desire sudden riches, and is glad if he can exchange the results of his fishing for a little bread and wine. He is pure in soul and body. He washes his hands in water and his spirit in solitude.

Of these fishermen who would have died in the obscurity of Capernaum without any one except their neighbors being aware of them, Jesus made saints whom men even to-day remember and invoke. A great man creates great men; from a somnolent people he raises up prophets; from a debilitated people, warriors; from an ignorant race, teachers. In any weather fires are lighted if there is a hand capable of kindling them. When David appears he finds at once his gibborim; an Agamemnon finds his heroes, an Arthur his knights, Charlemagne his paladins, Napoleon his Marshals. Jesus found among the men of the people of Galilee, His apostles.

Jesus did not seek armed warriors, men who would lay their enemies low, conquerors of provinces. His apostles were to fight, but the good fight of perfection against corruption, holiness against sin, health against sickness, spirit against matter, the happy future against the past, henceforth sterile. They were to aid Him in bringing His joyous message to the heavy-hearted. They were to speak in His name in places where He could not go, and in His name to carry on His work after His death.

THE MOUNT

The Sermon on the Mount is the greatest proof of the right of men to exist in the infinite universe. It is our sufficient justification, the patent of our soul's worthiness, the pledge that we can lift ourselves above ourselves to be more than men, the promise of that supreme possibility, the hope of our rising above the beast.

If an angel come down to us from the world above should ask us what our most precious possession is, the master-work of the Spirit at the height of its power, we would not show him the great wonderful oiled machines of which we foolishly boast, although they are but matter in the service of material and superfluous needs; but we would offer him the Sermon on the Mount, and afterwards, only afterwards, a few hundred pages taken from the poets of all the peoples. But the Sermon would be always the one refulgent diamond dimming with the clear splendor of its pure light the colored poverty of emeralds and sapphires.

And if men were called before a superhuman tribunal and had to give an account to the judges of all the inexplicable mistakes and of the ancient infamies every day renewed, and of the massacres which last for a thousand years, and of all the bloodshed between brothers, and of all the tears shed by the children of men, and of our hardness of heart and of our perfidy only equaled perhaps by our stupidity; we should not bring before this tribunal the reasonings of the philosophers, however learned and fine-spun; not the sciences, ephemeral systems of symbols and recipes; nor our laws, short-sighted compromises between ferocity and fear. The only thing we should have to show as restitution for so much evil, as atonement for our stubborn tardiness in paying our debts, as apology for sixty centuries of hideous history, as the one and supreme attenuation of all those accusations, is the Sermon on the Mount. Who has read it, even once, and has not felt at least in that brief moment while he read, a thrill of grateful tenderness, and an ache in his throat, a passion of love and remorse, a confused but urgent longing to act—so that those words shall not be words alone, nor this sermon mere sounds and signs, but so that they shall be imminent hope, life, alive in all those who live, present truth for always and for every one? He who has read it, if only once, and has not felt all this, he deserves our love beyond all other men, because all the love of men can never make up to him for what he has lost.

The Mount on which Jesus sat the day of the sermon was certainly not so high as that from which Satan had shown Him the Kingdoms of the earth. From it you could see only the plain, calm under the loving sunset light; on one side the silver-green oval of the lake, and on the other the long crest of Carmel where Elijah overcame the scullions of Baal. But from this humble mount which only the hyperbole of the chroniclers called mountain, from this little rocky hill scarcely rising above the level earth, Jesus disclosed that Kingdom which has no confines or boundaries, and wrote not on tablets of stone like Jehovah, but on flesh-and-blood hearts, the song of the new man, the hymn of glorification.

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace!" Isaiah was never more a prophet than at the moment when these words poured from his soul.

BLESSED ARE THE POOR

Jesus sat on a little hill in the midst of the first apostles surrounded by hundreds of eyes that were watching His eyes; and some one asked Him to whom would be allotted this Kingdom of Heaven, of which He so often spoke. Jesus answered with the nine beatitudes.

The beatitudes, so often spelled out even nowadays by people who have lost their meaning, are almost always misunderstood, mutilated, deformed, cheapened, distorted. And yet they epitomize the first day of Christ's teaching, that glorious day!

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Luke leaves out the words "in spirit," seeming to mean the "poor" and nothing else; and many people after him (some modern and malicious) have understood him to mean the simple-minded, the silly. They see in the words only a choice between the bankrupt and the imbecile.

When He spoke, Jesus was not thinking either of the first or the second. Jesus had no friendship for the rich and detested with all His soul the greedy desire for riches, the greatest obstacle to the true enrichment of the soul; Jesus was friendly to the poor and comforted them because they had less comfort than other people; He kept them near Him because of their greater need to be fed by loving words. But He was not so foolish as to think that to be poor, materially poor in the worldly sense of the word, is a sufficient title to enjoy the Kingdom, without any other qualifications.

Jesus never gave any sign of admiring that intelligence which is solely the intelligence of abstraction and the memory for phrases. Purely systematic philosophers, and metaphysical sophists, gropers in nature, devourers of books, would never have found grace in His eyes. But intelligence, the power of understanding the signs of the future and the meaning of symbols—enlightened and prophetic intelligence, the loving mastery of the truth—was a gift in His eyes also, and many times He grieved that His listeners and His disciples showed so little of it. For Him supreme intelligence consisted in realizing that the intelligence alone is not enough, that all the soul must be changed to obtain happiness, since happiness is not an absurd dream but eternally possible and within reach. But he fully understood that intelligence ought to aid us in this total transmutation. He could not therefore call to the fullness of the Kingdom of God the dull and the imbecile. Poor in spirit are those who are fully and painfully aware of their own spiritual poverty, of the faultiness of their own souls, of the smallness of the good that is in us all, of the moral indigence of most men. Only the poor who realize that they are really poor suffer from their poverty, and because they suffer from it try to escape from it. Very different these from men apparently rich, from those blind arrogant self-satisfied people who believe themselves fulfilled and perfected, in good standing with God and man, who feel no eagerness to climb upward because they delude themselves with thinking they are already on high, who will never enrich themselves because they do not realize their own fathomless poverty.

Those therefore who confess themselves poor and undergo suffering to acquire that veritable wealth named perfection, will become holy as God is holy, and theirs shall be the Kingdom of Heaven; those complacent people on the other hand who drape themselves in self-satisfaction, taking no heed of the foulness accumulated and hidden under their vainglory, will not enter into the Kingdom.

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK: FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH

The earth here promised is not the literal field of clods, nor monarchies with built-up cities. In the language of the

Messiah, "to inherit the earth" means to partake of the New Kingdom. The soldier who fights for the earthly earth needs to be fierce; but he who fights within himself for the conquest of the new earth and the new heaven must not abandon himself to anger, the counselor of evil, nor to cruelty, the negation of love. The meek are those who endure close contact with evil men and with themselves—often harder to bear—who do not break out into brutish rage when things go badly, but conquer their inner enemies with that quiet perseverance which more than sudden sterile furies shows the force of the soul. They are like water which is not hard to the touch, which seems to give way before other substances, but slowly rises, silently attacks, and calmly consumes, with the patience of the years, the hardest granites.

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. The afflicted, the weeping, those who feel disgust for themselves and pity for the world, who do not live in the supine stupidity of everyday life, who mourn over their own unhappiness and that of their brothers, who grieve over failures, over the blindness which delays the victory of light—because light for men cannot come from the sky if their own eyes do not reflect it —who grieve over the remoteness of that righteousness dreamed-of again and again, promised a thousand times, and yet always further away through our fault and every one's fault; those who mourn over an offense received instead of increasing the wrong by revenge, and who weep over the wrong they have done and over the good they might have done and did not; those who care little about the loss of a visible treasure but strain after the invisible treasure; those who mourn, hasten with their tears the day of grace, and it is right that they shall some day be comforted.

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER JUSTICE: FOR THEY SHALL BE FILLED

The justice which Jesus means is not the justice of men, obedience to human law, conformity to codes, respect for usage and for the established transactions of men. In the language of the psalmists, the prophets, the saints, the just man is he who lives according to the will of God, because God is the supreme type of all perfection. Not according to the law written by the Scribes set down in the Bible, diluted by Talmudic casuistries, obscured by the subtleties of the Pharisees; but according to the one simple Law which Jesus reduces to one commandment, "Love all men near and far, your fellow countrymen and foreigners, strangers and enemies." Those who hunger and thirst after this justice shall be filled in the Kingdom of Heaven. Even if they do not succeed in being perfect in all things, much will be pardoned for their endurance of the long vigil.

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL: FOR THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY

He who loves shall be loved, he who gives help shall find help. The law of retaliation is nullified for evil but remains valid for good. We constantly commit sins against the spirit and those sins will be forgiven us only as we forgive those committed against us. Christ is in all men and what we do to others will be done to us. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." If we have pity on others we may have pity for ourselves; God can pardon the evil which we do to ourselves only if we pardon the evil which others do to us.

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART: FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD

The Pure of Heart are those who have no other wish than for perfection, no other joy than victory over the evil which hunts us down on every side. He who has his heart crammed with furious desires, with earthly ambitions, with carnal pride and with all the lusts which convulse this ant-heap of the earth, can never see God face to face, will never know the sweetness of His magnificent felicity.

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS: FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED THE SONS OF GOD

These peacemakers are not the meek of the second beatitude. The meek refrain from answering evil with evil; the peacemakers do more, they return good for evil, they bring peace where wars are flaring up. When Jesus said He had come to bring war and not peace, He meant war to evil, to Satan, to the world, to evil which is wrong, to Satan who is Death, to the world which is an eternal battle. He means, in short, war against war. The peacemakers are those who wage war upon war, those who placate, those who bring about concord. The origin of every war is self-love, love which becomes love of riches, pride of possession, envy of those more wealthy, hatred for rivals; and the new law comes to teach hatred for oneself, contempt for measurable goods, love for all creatures, even for those who hate us. The peacemakers who teach and practice this love cut at the root of all war. When every man loves his brothers more than himself there will be no more wars, neither great nor small, neither civil nor imperial, neither of words nor of blows, between man and man, between class and class, between people and people. The peacemakers will have conquered the earth and they will be called the true sons of God, and they will enter among the first into His Kingdom.

BLESSED ARE THEY WHO HAVE BEEN PERSECUTED FOR JUSTICE' SAKE: FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

I send you out to found this Kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven, of that higher justice which is love, of that fatherly goodness whose name is God; I send you out therefore to fight against those who uphold injustice, the servants of materialism, the proselytes of the Adversary. They will defend themselves when attacked, and to defend themselves they will attack you. You will be tortured in body, crucified in soul, deprived of liberty and perhaps of life; but if you accept this suffering cheerfully to carry to others that justice which makes you suffer, this persecution will be for you an incontestable title to enter into the Kingdom which you have founded as far as was in your power.

BLESSED ARE YE WHEN MEN SHALL REPROACH YOU AND PERSECUTE YOU AND SAY ALL MANNER OF EVIL AGAINST YOU FALSELY FOR MY SAKE. REJOICE AND BE EXCEEDING GLAD: FOR GREAT IS YOUR REWARD IN HEAVEN: FOR SO PERSECUTED THEY THE PROPHETS WHICH WERE BEFORE YOU

Persecution is a material attack through physical, legal and political means. The persecutors can take away your bread, and the clear light of the sun, and divine liberty; they may break your bones, but you must endure more than mere persecution. You must expect insult and calumny. They will condemn you because you wish to change bestial men into saints. Wallowing in the foulness of their bestiality, they detest the idea of leaving their filth. But they will not be satisfied to strike only at your body, they will strike also at your soul. They will accuse you of all crimes, they will stone you with slander and contumely. Hogs will say that you are filthy, asses will swear that you are ignorant, ravens will accuse you of eating carrion, rams will drive you away as ill-smelling, the dissolute will cry out upon the scandal of your corruptness and thieves will denounce you for theft. But you must always rejoice because the insult of evil men is the consecration of your own goodness, and the mud thrown at you by the impure is the pledge of your purity. This is, as St. Francis says, "the perfect joy." Beyond all the graces which Christ gives to His friends is the grace of conquering oneself and willingly enduring injury, opprobrium, pains, discomforts. All the other gifts of God are not ours to glory in, because they come not from us, but from God; but in tribulation and in affliction we can glory because that is ours. All the prophets who have ever spoken upon the earth were insulted by men, and men will insult those who are to come. We can recognize prophets by this, that smeared with mud and covered with shame, they pass among men, bright-faced, speaking out what is in their hearts. No mud can close the lips of those who must speak. Even if the obstinate prophet is killed, they cannot silence him. His voice multiplied by the echoes of his death will be heard in all languages and through all the centuries.

This promise brings the beatitudes to their end.

By means of the beatitudes, Christ fully explains who are fit to be the citizens of His new Kingdom. Those citizens are henceforth found and sealed; every one can recognize them. The unwilling are warned, the uncertain are reassured. The rich, the proud, the satisfied, the violent, the unjust, the warlike, those who mock, those who do not hunger after perfection, those who persecute and outrage, can never enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. They cannot enter there until they are altogether conquered and changed, and have become the opposite of what they are now. Those who live happily according to the world, those whom the world envies, imitates and admires, are infinitely further from true happiness than those others whom the world scorns and hates. In this exulting beginning Jesus has turned upside down the human hierarchy; now as He goes on He will turn upside down the values of life, and no other revaluation will ever be so divinely paradoxical as His.

THE DIVINE PARADOX

Emasculated Gymnosophists and the cowardly sect of the Saturnists,—these are serious-minded men who can understand plain facts but cannot interpret those facts but merely repeat and spoil them—have always looked with unfriendly eyes on what is called the paradoxical. To save themselves the trouble of distinguishing between sacred paradoxes and those which are only a fatuous amusement, they make haste to pass judgment on all paradox as nothing else than the overturning of recognized old truths; hence, false and—they add, to clip the wings of vanity—as easy as possible to invent. One would suppose it seems to them more difficult to walk along the road already laid out, and to spell over line by line what was written before they were born by men who certainly had not their cowardly temperament.

But if these priests of the already-said would consider the few master ideas on which modern thought is living, or rather on which it is dying, they would discover that they are almost all overturnings, that is to say, paradoxes. When Rousseau says that men are born good but that society makes them bad, he turns inside out the accepted doctrine of original sin; when the disciples of progress affirm that from the worse comes the better; when the evolutionist affirms that the complex springs out of the simple; and the monist that all diversities are but manifestations of the One; and the Marxist that economic history is the basis of spiritual development; when the modern mathematical philosophers affirm that man is not as he has always been believed, the center of the universe, but a minute animal species on one of an infinite number of spheres scattered in the infinite; when the Protestants cry, "The Pope is of no account but only the Scriptures"; when the French Revolutionists say, "The Third Estate is nothing and should be everything"—what are all these people doing except overturning old and commonly held opinions?

But Jesus is the greatest overturner, the supreme maker of paradoxes, radical and without fear. This is His greatness, His eternal freshness and youth, the secret of the turning sooner or later of every great heart toward His Gospel.

He became incarnate to recreate men sunk in error and evil; He found error and evil in the world; how could He fail to overturn the maxims of the world? Read over again the words of the Sermon on the Mount. At every step it proclaims the desire of Jesus that what is low shall be recognized as lofty; that the last shall be first; that the overlooked shall be the preferred; that the scorned shall be reverenced, and finally, that the old truth shall be considered as error, and ordinary life as death and corruption. He has said to the past, benumbed in its death agony, to Nature, too easily followed, to universal and common opinion of mankind, the most decisive "NO" in the history of the world.

In this He is faithful to the spirit of His race which in its very downfall always found reasons for greater hope. The most enslaved people dreamed of dominating other peoples with the help of the Son of David. The most despised race felt that glory was promised them, the people most punished by God believed itself the most loved; the most sinful was certain that it alone was to be saved. This absurd reaction of the Hebrew conscience became in Christ a revision of values, became, because of His superhuman origin, a divine renovation of all the principles followed and respected by humanity.

Christ's first discovery is like that of Buddha, "Men are unhappy, all men—even those who seem happy." Siddharta to put an end to pain counseled the suppression of life itself. Jesus had another hope, more sublime in that it appears absurd. He taught that men are unhappy because they have not found true life. Let them become the opposite of what they are, let them do the contrary of what they do, and the festival of happiness on earth will begin.

Until now they have followed Nature, they have let themselves be guided by their instincts, they have accepted and that only superficially a provisional and insufficient law, they have worshiped lying gods, they have thought they could find happiness in wine, in flesh, in gold, in authority, in cruelty, in art, in learning; and the only result has been that their suffering has become more intense. The explanation is that they have lost the path, that they must turn straight around, renounce what seemed good, pick up what was thrown away, worship what was burned, and burn what was worshiped, conquer the animal instincts instead of satisfying them, struggle with their nature instead of justifying it, make a new law and live by it, faithfully, in the spirit. If until now they have not obtained what they looked for, the only possible cure is to turn their present life upside down, that is, to transform their souls.

Our permanent unhappiness is a proof that the experiment of the old world has failed, that Nature is hostile, that the past is wrong, that to live like animals according to the elementary instinct of animals, only slightly furbished up and varnished with humanity, results in wretchedness and despair.

Those who have laughed at or wept over the infinite wretchedness of man have seen clearly. The pessimists are right. Those who denounce our boasting, those who scorn our strengthlessness, those who despise our ignominy, how can they be refuted?

Whoever is not born to wriggle contentedly in the worm heap, eating his particle of earth, he who has not only a stomach and two hands, but a soul and a heart; he whose soul is of finer temper because it has been so beaten upon, is bound to feel a horror of mankind. For hard, arid natures this horror changes into repugnance and hate; for others richer and more generous it turns to pity and love.

When we read Leopardi and consider how he lost (perhaps because of the imperfect Christians surrounding him) his youthful love of Christ and, eating his heart out in reasoning despair, ended with the despairing lines, "Tiresome and bitter is life, never aught but that"; who of us will have the insight to reply, "Be quiet, unfortunate man! If you taste nothing but bitterness, it comes from the wormwood you are eating; if you find life tiresome the fault is yours; you yourself have used the infernal stone of barren reasoning to cauterize those feelings which would have made your life cheerful or at least endurable"?

No, Leopardi was not mistaken, for when you see men as they are and have no hope of saving them, or changing them, and you cannot live like them because you are too different from them, and cannot succeed in loving them because you believe them condemned to eternal unhappiness and wickedness, when you feel that the brutes will always be brutes and the cowards always cowards and the foul always more sunk in their foulness, what else can you do but counsel your heart to silence, and hope for death? There is but one question: are men unchangeable, not to be transformed, not capable of becoming better? Or, on the other hand, can man rise above himself and make himself holy? The answer is of terrible importance. All our destiny is in that question. Among superior men many have not been fully conscious of this dilemma. Many have believed and still believe that the form of life can be changed, but not the essence; and that to man everything will be given except to change the nature of his spirit; that man can become yet more master of the world, richer and more learned, but he cannot change his moral structure. His feelings, his primary instincts will always remain as they were in the wild occupants of the caves, in the constructors of the lake cities, in the first barbarians and in the peoples of the most ancient kingdoms.

Others feel an equal horror of man as he has been and as he is, but before they sink into the despair of moral nihilism they look at man as he could be. They have a firm faith in his perfectibility of soul and find happiness in the divine but terrible task of preparing the happiness of their brothers.

For men who are truly men there is no other choice: either the blackest anguish or the boldest faith; either death or salvation. The past is horrible, the present is repellent; let us give all our life, let us offer all our power of loving and understanding in order that to-morrow may be better, that the future may be happy. If up to now we have erred, and the irrefutable proof is the black past from which we have come, let us work for the birth of a new man and a new life. There are but two possibilities: either happiness will never be given to men or, and this Jesus believed firmly, if happiness could be our ordinary and eternal possession there is no other price for attaining it but to change our course, transform our souls, create new values, deny the old, answer the "No" of holiness to the false "Yes" of the world. If Christ *was* mistaken, nothing remains but absolute and universal negation, resolute faith in nothing. Either complete and rigorous atheism, not the maimed hypocritical atheism of the cowardly sects of to-day; or active faith in Christ who saves and resurrects us by His love.

YE HAVE HEARD

The first prophets, the earliest legislators, the leaders of young nations, the Kings, founders of cities and institutors of justice, the wise masters, the saints, began the domination of the beast. With spoken and sculptured word they tamed wolfish men, domesticated the men of the woods, held barbarians in restraint, taught those bearded children, softened the violent, the vengeful, the inhuman. With the gentleness of the word or the terror of punishment (Orpheus or Draco), by promises or by threats, in the name of the gods of high heavens or the gods under the earth, they trimmed the nails, which immediately grew long again; put muzzles over the sharp-fanged mouths; protected the defenseless, the victims, pilgrims, women. The old law that is found with only a few variations in the Manava Dharmasastra, in the Pentateuch, in the Ta-Hio, in the Avesta, in the traditions of Solon and of Numa, in the sententious maxims of Hesiod and the Seven Wise Men, is the first attempt, rough, imperfect and inadequate, to mold animality into a sketch, a beginning, a simulacrum of humanity.

This law reduced itself to a few elementary rules; not to steal, not to kill, not to perjure, not to fornicate, not to tyrannize over the weak, not to mistreat strangers and slaves any more than was necessary. These are the social virtues, strictly necessary for a common life, useful to all. The legislator contented himself with naming the most ordinary sins, asked for a minimum of inhibition. His ideal rarely surpassed a sort of approximate justice. But the law took for granted the predominance of evil, the sovereignty of instinct, earlier than the law and still existing. Every precept implies its infraction, every rule the practice of the opposite. For this reason the old law, the law of the first peoples, is only an insufficient channeling of the brute force eternal and triumphant. It is a collection of compromises and half-measures between custom and justice, between nature and reason, between the rebellious beast and the divine model.

Men of ancient times, carnal, physical, hearty, lusty, muscular, sanguine, sturdy, solid, hairy men with ruddy faces, eaters of raw meat, ravishers, cattle-stealers, mutilators of their enemies, fit to be called, like Hector the Trojan, "killers of men," strong, zestful warriors who, having dragged by the feet their slaughtered antagonists, refreshed themselves with fat haunches of oxen and of mutton, emptying enormous cups of wine; these men ill-tamed, ill-subdued to the law such as we see them in the Mahabharata, and in the Iliad, in the poem of Izdubar, and in the book of the wars of Jehovah, such men without the fear of punishment and of God would have been still more unrestrained and ferocious. In times when a head was asked for an eye, an arm for a finger, and a hundred lives for a life, a law of retaliation which asked only an eye for an eye and a life for a life was a notable victory of generosity, appalling though it seems after the teaching of Jesus.

But the law was more often disobeyed than observed; the strong endured it against their will, the powerful who ought to have protected it, evaded it; the bad violated it openly; the weak cheated it. And even if it had been entirely obeyed by every man every day it would not have been enough to conquer the evil perpetually boiling up, held down only for a moment, rendered harder to enact but not impossible, condemned but not abolished. It was a reduction of innate fierceness, not its total extirpation. Men, shackled but reluctant, had learned to pretend obedience, did a little good where every one could see them in order to be more free to do wrong secretly, exaggerated the observance of external precepts that they might the better betray the foundation and spirit of the law.

They had come to this point when Jesus spoke on the Mount. He understood that the old law was doomed, drowned in the stagnant swamps of formalism; the endless work of the education of the human race was to begin over again, the ashes must be brushed away, the flame of original enthusiasm must be blown into it, it must be carried through to its original destination which is always metanoia, the changing of the soul. And for this it was necessary to terminate the old law, the dried and burnt-out old law.

With Jesus therefore begins the new law: the old is abrogated and declared insufficient.

He begins at every example with the words—"Ye have heard it said" . . . and at once He substitutes for the old command, which He purifies by paradox or actually overthrows, the new command, "But I say unto you . . ."

With these "buts" a new phase of the human education begins. It is not the fault of Jesus if we are still groping along in the twilight of very early dawn.

BUT I SAY UNTO YOU

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill . . . but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother . . . shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." Jesus goes straight to the extreme. He does not even consider the possibility of striking a brother, much less of killing him. He does not conceive even the intention, the wish to kill. A single moment of anger, a single abusive word, a single offensive phrase, are for him the equivalent of assassination. Unimaginative, mediocre people cry out, "Exaggeration." There can be no grandeur where there is no passion and passion is exaggeration. Jesus has His own logic and makes no mistake. Murder is only the final carrying out of a feeling. From anger follow evil words, from evil words, evil deeds; from blows, murder. It is not enough therefore to forbid the final act, the material and external act. That is only the result of an interior process which has made it inevitable. The right thing to do is to cut at the root of the evil to destroy the evil plant of hate which bears the poisonous fruit.

Achilles, son of Peleus, that same Achilles who was wrathful because they took away his concubine, and who begged the Gods to let him become a cannibal so that he could set his teeth in his dead enemies' flesh, Achilles of the silver-footed mother said: "Whether they come from Gods or from men, ill-omened are quarrels and the anger which drives even a wise man to wrath, wrath which sweeter than honey in the mouth grows greater in men's hearts." Achilles, after the massacre of his companions, after the death of his dearest friend, discovers finally what a thing is wrath, which kindles and burns and not even a river of blood can quench it. The wrathful hero knows what an evil thing is wrath, but he is not converted. And he foregoes his wrath against the king of men only to vent the fury of his vengeance upon the murdered body of Hector.

Anger is like fire: it can be smothered only at the first spark; afterwards it is too late. Jesus uttered the profoundest truth when He decreed the same penalty for the first hot words as for murder. When all men learn to conquer at the very start their outbreaks of resentment and to curb their imprecations, quarrels of words or of deeds will flame up no longer between man and his brother man, and homicide will become only a black memory of our wild-beast past.

"Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery, but I say unto you that whoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery already in his heart." Even here Jesus does not stop with the material fact which seems of importance to gross men. He always soars from the body to the soul, from flesh to will, from the visible to the invisible. The tree is judged by its fruit, but the seed is judged by the tree. Evil visible to all is seen too late. In its maturity it can no longer be prevented. Sin is the pustule which suddenly appears, but which would not have appeared if the blood had been purged from its malignant humors in time. When a man and another man's wife desire each other, the betrayal is complete, they have committed adultery whether or not they are guilty in deed. A man marries not only the body of his wife, but her soul. If her soul is lost to him he has lost the greater part. To lose also the lesser part may be unendurably painful, but it is not vital. A woman overcome and forced without her consent by a stranger not loved by her, does not commit adultery. What counts is the intention, the feeling. He who wishes to maintain himself pure must abstain also from the mere silent passing look of desire, because the look of desire if not repressed is repeated and a look passes into a word, into a kiss, and into love which spares no lover. To think of, to imagine, to desire a betrayal is already a betrayal. He alone who cuts the first thread can save himself from the great net of perversity which, starting from a glance, grows until not even death can break it. And Jesus advises expressly to pluck out the eye and cast it away if evil comes from the eye, and to cut off the hand and throw it away if evil comes from the hand,—advice which dismays the cowardly and even the strong. Yet even the most cowardly, when threatened by cancer, have their arms or legs cut off, and if a tumor grows in the bowels, are ready to have their bodies cut open to save their lives. Men are concerned to save the body, but grudge any sacrifice necessary to keep in health the soul, without which the body is only an insensate machine of flesh and blood.

"Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:

"But I say unto you, Swear not at all, neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:

"Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

"Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

"But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

He who swears to the truth is afraid, he who swears to the false is a traitor. The first believes that the power invoked could punish him, the other is an impostor who profits by the faith of others the more readily to deceive them. In both cases swearing is wrong. For us impotent men to call on a superior power to bear witness or to be a judge in our miserable quarrels of opposed interest, to swear by our heads or by our sons' heads when we cannot change the appearance of the smallest part of our body, is an absurd challenge, a blasphemy. He who always speaks the truth not through dread of penalties, but through natural desire of his soul, needs no oaths.

Oaths can almost always be called in question, and never serve to give perfect security even to those who seem to be satisfied with them. In the history of the world there are more stories of broken oaths than of oaths kept, and he who uses most words to swear is precisely the man who is already thinking of breaking his oath.

"Ye have heard it said, Honor thy father and thy mother, but I say unto you, he that loveth his father and mother more than me is not worthy of me." And also, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Here also the old precept which ties the new order to the old order with the tether of reverence is brusquely reversed.

Jesus does not condemn filial love, but He puts it in its right place, which is not first of all, as the people of antiquity thought. For Him the greatest love, the purest is paternal love. The father loves in the son the future, what is new; the son loves in the father, the past, the old. But Jesus comes to change the past, to destroy the old. Homage paid to parents, shutting oneself up in tradition and in the family, is a barrier to the renovation of the world. Love of all men is a greater thing than love for those who gave us life. Salvation for all men is infinitely preferable to the service of the few who make up a family. To have the greater, one must needs abandon the less. It would be more convenient to love only those of our family and to make this love (often forced and simulated) an excuse for not being friendly to any one else. But he who is devoting his life to something which transcends him has a great undertaking which takes all his strength and every moment of his every hour until the last. He who wishes to serve the universe with a broad spirit must give up, and if that is not enough, deny the common affections. He who wishes to be Father in the divine sense of the word, even without physical paternity, cannot be merely a son. "Let the dead bury their dead." In the old law, and more than ever in the learned traditions, there were hundreds of precepts for the purification of the body, minute, tiresome, complicated precepts without any true earthly or heavenly foundation. The Pharisees made the best part of religion consist in the observance of these traditions because it is much less trouble to wash a cup than your own soul. For a dead thing like a cup a little water and a towel are enough; for the soul there must be tears of love and the fire of desire. "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. Do ye not understand that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man."

The bath with water from the well or from the fountain, the bodily and ritual bath, does not take the place of the essential inner purification, and it is better to eat with hands soiled with sweat than to repel a hungry brother with hands washed in three waters. Filth issues from the body, disappears into the vaults and enriches orchards and fields. But there are many finely dressed gentlemen so full to the throat with another sort of filth that the stench of it comes out with the words from their mouths, vainly washed and rinsed. And this filth does not disappear into underground vaults, but soils every one's life, poisons the air, befouls even the innocent. From these excremental men we should stand far away, even if they are washed twelve times a day; the soaping of the skin is not enough if the heart sends up noisome thoughts. The sewer-cleaner, if he thinks no evil, is certainly cleaner than the rich man who, while splashing in the perfumed water of his marble bath tub, is meditating some new fornication or fraud.

NONRESISTANCE

But Jesus had not yet arrived at the most stupefying of His revolutionary teachings. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: But whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."

There could be no more definite repudiation of the old law of retaliation. The greater part of those who call themselves Christians not only have never observed this new Commandment, but have never been willing to pretend to approve of it. For an infinite number of believers this principle of not resisting evil has been the unendurable and inacceptable scandal of Christianity.

There are three answers which men can make to violence: revenge, flight, turning the other cheek. The first is the barbarous principle of retaliation, now smoothed over and emasculated in the legal codes, but nevertheless prevailing in usage: evil is returned for evil, either in one's own person or by the means of intermediaries, representatives of our tribal lack of civilization, called judges or executioners. To the evil committed by the first offender are added the evils committed by the officers of justice. Often the punishment turns on the punisher and the terrible chain of violence from one revenge to another stretches out interminably. Wrong is two-edged; it fails even if inflicted with the desire of doing good, in nations, or families or individuals. A first crime brings after it a train of expiations and punishments which are distributed with sinister impartiality between offenders and offended. The law of retaliation can give a bestial relief to him who is first struck, but instead of lessening evil it multiplies it.

Flight is no better than retaliation. He who hides himself redoubles his enemies' courage. Fear of retaliation can on rare occasions hold back the violent hand, but the man who takes flight invites pursuit. He who hides invites his adversary to make an end of him. His weakness becomes the accomplice of the ferocity of others. Here also evil begets evil.

In spite of its apparent absurdity the only way is that commanded by Jesus. If a man gives you a blow and you return another blow, he will answer with his fists, you in turn with kicks, weapons will be drawn and one of you may lose your life, often for a trivial reason. If you fly, your adversary will follow you and emboldened by his first experience will knock you down. Turning the other cheek means not receiving the second blow. It means cutting the chain of the inevitable wrongs at the first link. Your adversary who expected resistance or flight is humiliated before you and before himself. He was ready for anything but this. He is thrown into confusion, a confusion which is almost shame. He has the time to come to himself; your immobility cools his anger, gives him time to reflect. He cannot accuse you of fear because you are ready to receive the second blow, and you yourself show him the place to strike. Every man has an obscure respect for courage in others, especially if it is moral courage, the rarest and most difficult sort of bravery. An injured man who feels no resentment and who does not run away shows more strength of soul, more mastery of himself, more true heroism than he who in the blindness of rage rushes upon the offender to render back to him twice the evil received. Quietness, when it is not stupidity, gentleness, when it is not cowardice, astound common souls as do all marvelous things. They make the very brute understand that this man is more than a man. The brute himself when not incited to follow by a hot answer or by cowardly flight, remains paralyzed, feels almost afraid of this new, unknown, puzzling force, the more so because among the greatest exciting factors for the man who strikes, is his anticipated pleasure in the angry blow, in the resistance, in the ensuing struggle. Man is a fighting animal; but with no resistance offered, the pleasure disappears; there is no zest left. There is no longer an adversary, but a superior who says quietly, "Is that not enough? Here is the other cheek; strike as long as you wish. It is better that my face should suffer than my soul. You can hurt me as much as you wish, but you cannot force me to follow you into a mad, brutal rage. The fact that some one has wronged me cannot force me to act wrongly."

Literally to follow this command of Jesus demands a mastery possessed by few, of the blood, of the nerves, and of all the instincts of the baser part of our being. It is a bitter and repellent command; but Jesus never said it would be easy to follow Him. He never said it would be possible to obey Him without harsh renunciations, without stern and continuous inner battles; without the denial of the old Adam and the birth of the new man. And yet the results of non-resistance, even if they are not always perfect, are certainly superior to those of resistance or flight. The example of so extraordinary a spiritual mastery, so impossible and unthinkable for common men, the almost superhuman fascination of conduct so contrary to usual customs, traditions and passions; this example, this spectacle of power, this puzzling miracle, unexpected like all miracles, difficult to understand like all prodigies, this example of a strong, sane man who looks like other men, and yet who acts almost like a God, like a being above other beings, above the motives which move other men—this example if repeated more than once, if it cannot be laid to supine stupidity, if it is accompanied by proofs of physical courage when physical courage is necessary to enjoy and not to harm—this example has an effectiveness which we can imagine, soaked though we are in the ideas of revenge and reprisals. We imagine it with difficulty; we cannot prove it because we have had too few of such examples to be able to cite even partial experiments as proofs of our intuition.

But if this command of Jesus has never been obeyed or too rarely obeyed, there is no proof that it cannot be followed, still less that it ought to be rejected. It is repugnant to human nature, but all real moral conquests are repugnant to our nature. They are salutary amputations of a part of our soul—for some of us the most living part of the soul—and it is natural that the threat of mutilation should make us shudder. But whether it pleases us or not, only by accepting this command of Christ can we solve the problem of violence. It is the only course which does not add evil to evil, which does not multiply evil a hundredfold, which prevents the infection of the wound, which cuts out the malignant growth when it is only a tiny pustule. To answer blows with blows, evil deeds with evil deeds, is to meet the attacker on his own ground, to proclaim oneself as low as he. To answer with flight is to humiliate oneself before him, and incite him to continue. To answer a furiously angry man with reasonable words is useless effort. But to answer with a simple gesture of acceptance, to endure for three days the bore who inflicts himself on you for an hour, to offer your breast to the man who has struck you on the shoulder, to give a thousand to the man who has stolen a hundred from you, these are acts of heroic excellence, supine though they may appear, so extraordinary that they overcome the brutal bully with the irresistible majesty of the divine. Only he who has conquered himself can conquer his enemies. Only the saints can charm wolves to mildness. Only he who has transformed his own soul can transform the souls of his brothers, and transform the world into a less grievous place for all.

AGAINST NATURE

Nonresistance to evil is profoundly repugnant to our nature, but to obey the teachings of Christ means that our nature will come to feel disgust for what now pleases us, and find happiness in what now fills us with horror. His every word takes for granted this total renovation of the human spirit: He fearlessly contradicts our most ordinary inclinations and the deepest of our instincts. He praises what every one avoids. He condemns what all men seek. He not only gives the lie to what men teach (often very different from what they really think and do), but He contradicts what they actually think and do every day.

Jesus does not believe in the perfection of the natural soul, of the original soul. He believes in its future perfection, only to be reached by a complete overturning of its present nature. His task is the reform of man; more than that, the making-over of man. With Him begins the new race; He is the model, the arch-type, the Adam of humanity remodeled and recast. Socrates tried to reform the mind, Moses the law, others went no further than altering a ritual, a code, a system, a science; but Jesus did not aim at changing one part of man but the whole man from top to bottom, changing the inner man who is the motive-power and origin of all the facts and the words of the world. Therefore we need not expect Him to compromise or to wheedle. He will make no concessions to evil and imperfect nature; He will not find specious reasons to justify it as the philosophers do. You cannot serve Jesus and Nature. He who stands with Jesus is against the old animal nature and is working for the higher nature which must conquer it. Everything else is idle talk, dust and ashes.

Nothing is more common among men than the thirst for riches. To heap up money by any means, even the most infamous, has always seemed the sweetest and most respectable of occupations. But he who wishes to come with me, said Jesus, must go and sell that which he has and give it to the poor and he shall have treasures in Heaven. Poverty is the first requisite for the citizenship of the Kingdom.

All men anxiously take thought for the morrow. They are always afraid lest the ground give way under their feet, lest there may not be enough bread to last to the next harvest. They fear that they will not have enough clothes to cover their bodies and the bodies of their children. But Jesus teaches us, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Every man would like to stand first even among his equals. He wishes to be superior to those who surround him, to command, to dominate, to seem greater, richer, handsomer, wiser. The whole history of men is only the terror of standing second; but Jesus teaches us, "And whosoever of you will be the chiefest shall be servant of all." The greatest is the smallest, the most powerful shall serve the weakest, he who exalts himself shall be humbled, he who humbles himself shall be exalted.

Vanity is another universal curse of men. It poisons even their good actions, because nearly always they perform those insignificant good actions so that they may be seen. They do evil secretly and good openly. Jesus commands us to do just the opposite. "But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; . . . And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. . . . But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet. . . . Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disguise their faces, that they may appear to fast. . . . But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face."

The instinct of self-preservation is the strongest of all those which dominate us. No infamy, cruelty or cowardice is too much for us to pay for the safety of this handful of animated dust. But Jesus tells us: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake the same shall save it." For what we *call* life is not true life and he who gives up his soul ruins also the flesh which houses it.

Every one of us has a hankering to judge his fellows. To sit in judgment makes us feel that we are above those judged, better, more righteous, innocent. To accuse others is like saying, "*We* are not thus." As a matter of fact it is always the hunchbacks who first cry out on those whose shoulders are a little bent. But Jesus says, "Judge not that ye be not judged, condemn not and ye shall not be condemned, forgive and ye shall be forgiven."

Every man boasts of being really manly, that is, a grave, mature, wise, substantial, worthy person, who understands the nature of things and who can reason and have an opinion on all subjects. A speech that is too sincere is said to be childish; a simple person is scornfully called childish. But when the disciples asked Him who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus answered, "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein."

The serious-minded man, the devout, the pure, the Pharisee, avoids if possible the company of sinners, of the fallen, of the defiled, and receives as equals at his table only the righteous. But Jesus tirelessly announces that He has come to seek for sinners and not for the righteous, the bad and not the good, and He feels no shame in sitting down to dinner in the house of the publican, where a prostitute anoints his feet. The truly pure man cannot be corrupted by the corrupt, and does not feel that for fear of soiling his garments he needs leave them to die in their own vileness.

The avarice of men is so great that every one tries to take as much as he can from others and to give back as little. Every one seeks to possess; praises of generosity are only an attempt to cover professional beggary with a decent mask; but Jesus affirms, "It is better to give than to receive."

All of us hate most of the people we know. We hate them because they have more than we, because they will not give us all we would like to have, because they do not pay enough attention to us, because they are different from us; in a word, because they exist. We even go so far as to hate our friends, even our benefactors. And Jesus commands us to love men, to love them all, to love even those who hate us.

No one who disobeys this command can call himself a Christian; though he is on the point of death if he does not love his slayer, he has no right to call himself a Christian.

Love for ourselves, the origin of our hatred for others includes all other tendencies and passions. He who conquers self-love, and the hatred toward others, is already entirely transformed; the rest flows from this as a natural consequence. Hatred toward oneself and love for enemies is the beginning and end of Christianity. The greatest victory over the fierce, blind, brutal man of antiquity is this and nothing else. Men cannot be born again into the happiness of peace until they love those who have offended against them. To love your enemies is the only way to leave not an enemy on earth.

BEFORE LOVE

Those who refuse Christ have many easily understandable reasons for not accepting Him: they would need to renounce their old personalities and they cannot see that they would gain much by this renunciation; and they are afraid of losing the dusty rubbish which seems magnificence to them. People who deny Christ as an excuse for not following His teachings have justified themselves of late by another reason, a learned reason: they claim that He said nothing new. His words can be found in the Orient and in the Occident centuries earlier. Either He stole them, or plagiarized unconsciously. If He said nothing new, He is not great; if He is not great, there is no need to listen to Him. Let the ignorant admire Him, the stupid obey Him, the foolish respect Him!

However, these experts in the genealogy of ideas do not say whether the ideals of Jesus, let them be new or old, should be accepted or rejected; they do not dare to pretend that Christ did nothing of value when He consecrated by His death a great truth, a forgotten, unused truth. They do not look carefully to see whether there is a real identity of sense and of spirit between the ideas of Jesus and those other older ideas, or whether there is merely a simple assonance and a distant verbal resemblance. And in the meantime, in order to avoid being misled in that matter, they reject Christ's law and that of the philosophers who, they pretend, were Christ's teachers, and they continue tranquilly to lead their filthy lives as if the Gospels had not been addressed to them as to other men.

After the promulgation of the old Law there was amity between blood kin; and the citizens of the same city bore with each other and did one another no harm; but for strangers, if they were not guests, there was only hatred and extermination. Inside the family a little love; inside the city an approximate justice; outside the walls and the frontiers inextinguishable hatred. Centuries later voices were heard which asked a little love also for the neighbor, for those who were not of the same household but of the same nation, which asked for a little justice even for strangers, even for enemies. This would have been a wonderful step forward; but these voices—they were so few, so weak, so distant—were not heard, or, if heard, were not heeded.

Four centuries before Christ a wise man of China, M'-Ti, wrote a whole book, the Kie-Siang-Ngai, to say that men should love each other. He wrote, "The wise man who wants to improve the world can improve it only if he knows with certainty the origin of disorders; if he does not know that, he cannot improve it. . . . Whence come disorders? They spring up because men do not love each other. Workmen and children have no filial feeling for their employers and parents. Children love themselves but do not love their parents; they cheat their parents for their own purposes. Younger brothers love themselves but do not love their older brothers; subjects love themselves but do not love their princes; the father has no indulgence for the son, the older brother for the younger brother, the prince for his subjects. The father loves himself and does not love his son; he wrongs his son to his own advantage . . . thus, everywhere brigands love their own homes and not their neighbors' homes, and for this they sack other men's houses to fill their own. Thieves love their own bodies and do not love men, wherefore they steal from men for the good of their own bodies. If thieves considered the bodies of other men as they do their own, who would rob? The thieves would stay their hands. . . . If universal mutual love should come, countries would not resort to blows, families would not be troubled, thieves would hold their hands, princes, subjects, fathers and sons would be respectful and indulgent and the world would be better."

For M'-Ti, love, or, to translate it more exactly, benevolence composed of respect and indulgence, is the mortar to hold citizens and the state more closely united. It is a remedy against the evils of life-in-common, a social panacea.

"Answer insults with courtesy," suggests timidly the mysterious Lao-Tse; but courtesy is prudence or mildness, not love. His contemporary, old Confucius, according to his disciple Thseng-Tse, taught a doctrine which consisted in uprightness of heart, and in loving one's neighbor as oneself (neighbor and not the distant one, the stranger, the enemy) as much as ourselves and not more than ourselves! Confucius preached filial love and general benevolence, necessary to the good ordering of kingdoms, but he did not dream of condemning hate. In the same Lun-Yu, where the words of Thseng-Tse are read, we find these other words, taken from the oldest Confucian text, the Ta-Hio: "Only the just and human man is capable of justly loving and hating men."

His contemporary Gautama recommends love for men, for all men, even the most wretched and despised. And the same love is to be felt for animals, for the smallest among animals, for all living beings. In Buddhism love of man for man is only a salutary exercise for the total eradication of self-love, first and strongest prop of life. Buddha wishes to suppress suffering; and to suppress suffering he sees no other way than to drown personal souls and universal souls in Nirvana,—in nothingness. The Buddhist does not love his brother out of love for his brother, but out of self-love,—that is, to avoid suffering, to overcome egotism, to approach absorption in the stream of life. His universal love is cold and self-seeking, egotistical, a form of indifference, stoical in grief as in joy.

In Egypt every dead body took with it into the tomb a copy of the book of the dead, an anticipatory apology of the soul before the tribunal of Osiris. The dead praises himself: he has been righteous and has given to the needy, "I have starved no one! I have made no one weep! I have not killed! I have not commanded treacherous murder! I have defrauded no one! I have given bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, a boat to the traveler halted on his journey, sacrifices to the gods, funeral banquets to the dead." This is righteousness and these are works of mercy (had they really as a matter of fact done all that they claimed?) but we find no love here, much less love for enemies. If we wish to know how the Egyptians treated their enemies let us read an inscription of the great king, Phiops I Miriri: "This army went in peace; it entered as it pleased into the country of the Hirushaitu. This army went in peace; it laid waste the country of the Hirushaitu. This army went in peace; they cut down all their fig trees and their grape vines. This army went in peace; they set on fire all their houses. This army went in peace; it massacred their soldiers by myriads. This army went in peace; it carried away their men, women and children in great numbers, and for this, more than for any other thing, did his Holiness rejoice."

Zarathushtra also leaves a law for the Iranians. This law commands the faithful of Ahura Mazdâ to be kind to their companions in the faith. They are to give clothes to the naked and they are not to refuse bread to the hungry working man. We are still concerned with material charity towards those who belong to us, who serve us, who are our neighbors. There is no talk of love.

It has been said that Jesus added nothing to the Mosaic law, and only repeated the old Commandments. "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." Thus speaks Moses in Deuteronomy, "And thou shalt consume all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shalt have no pity upon them." Thus it is written in Deuteronomy: a step further and we have reached Love, "Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." This is a beginning: do no wrong to strangers in memory of the time when you also were a stranger; but the stranger who lives with us is not an enemy, and to refrain from wronging him, does not mean to do good to him. Exodus commands not to wrong him. Leviticus is more generous, "And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land ye shalt not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself. . . ." Always the foreigner who lives with you and has become your fellow-citizen, hence like one of your friends. In the same book we read, "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people." This is another step forward. Do no harm to him who offends you, provided that he is of your own nation. We have come, if not to pardon, to generous forgetfulness, although only for neighbors.

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Neighbor, fellow-citizen, the man who is your racial brother, who can help you. But your enemy? There is also an admonition about the treatment of your enemy: "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If you see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him." Oh, great kindness of Jewish antiquity! It would be so sweet to drive the ass further, so that his master would have more trouble in finding him: and when you see the ass fallen down under his pack-saddle, how amusing it would be to smile in your beard and pass on; but the heart of the old Jew was not hardened to this degree: an ass was too precious in those times and those conditions: no one could live without at least one ass in the stable, and every one had an ass. To-day yours has escaped and to-morrow mine may run away. Do not let us avenge ourselves on our animals even if the master is a brute. Because if I am that man's enemy he is my enemy. Let us set him a good example, an example by which we hope he will profit; let us lend him a hand to readjust the pack-saddle of his ass; let us do to others what we hope others will do to us, and above the crupper and the ears of the ass let us, as merciful men, lay aside every evil thought.

This is rather too little: the old Jew has already made a tremendous effort in caring for the animals of his enemy, but the Psalms, to make up for it, resound at every step with outcries against enemies and with violent demands to the Lord to persecute and destroy them. "As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them; let burning coals fall upon them . . . let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again. Let destruction come upon him unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself; into that very destruction let him fall. And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord!"

In such a world it is natural that Saul should be astounded that he was not killed by his enemy David, and that Job should boast of not having exulted in the misfortunes of an enemy. Only in the later proverbs do we find words which forecast Jesus' saying, "Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee." The enemy is to be punished, but by hands more powerful than thine. Then the anonymous moralist of the Old Testament comes finally to charity, "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink." This is progress: pity does not stop with the ox, but extends itself also to the owner. But the marvels of love of the Sermon on the Mount cannot have sprung from these timid maxims hidden away in a corner of the Scriptures.

But there is, they say, Hillel, the Rabbi Hillel, the great Hillel, master of Gamaliel, Hillel Hababli or the Babylonian. This celebrated Pharisee lived a little before Jesus and taught, they say, the same things which Jesus afterwards taught. He was a liberal Judean, a rational Pharisee, an intelligent rabbi; but was he therefore a Christian? It is true that he said these words, "Do not do unto others what is displeasing to you; this is the whole Law, the rest is only explanation of it." These are fine words for a master of the old law, but how far away they are from those of the overturner of the ancient law! This is a negative command, "Do not do." He does not say, "Do good to those who wrong you," but "Do not do to others (and these others are certainly companions, fellow-citizens, members of the family and friends) what you feel to be evil." He mildly forbids harmfulness; he gives no absolute command to love. As a matter of fact, the descendants of Hillel were those Talmudists who mired the law in the great swamp of casuistry. The descendants of Jesus were the martyrs who blessed their torturers.

And Philo, the Alexandrian Jew, the Platonizing metaphysician, some twenty years older than Jesus, left a treatise on the love of men; but Philo, with all his talents and with all his mystical and Messianic speculations, is, like Hillel, a theorist, a man of pens and ink-pots, of learning, of books, of systems, of abstractions, of classifications. His dialectic strategy brings into the field thousands of words in parade formation, but he is never inspired to pronounce the one word that burns up in an instant all the past, the one word which brings hearts together. He has talked of love more than Christ, but he could never have said, and he would not have been able to understand, what Christ said to his ignorant friends on the Mount.

ACHILLES AND PRIAM

Is it possible that in Greece, that well-spring from whence all have drunk, there was no love for enemies? Would-be modern pagans, enemies of the "Palestine superstition," claim that Greek thought has everything in it. In the spiritual life of the Occident, Greece is like China to the East, mother of all invention.

In the Ajax of Sophocles, famous Odysseus is moved to pity at the sight of a fallen enemy reduced to misery. In vain Athena herself, Hellenic wisdom personified in the sacred owl, reminds him that "the most delightful mirth is to laugh at one's enemies." Ulysses is not convinced. "I pity him, although he is my enemy, because I see him so unfortunate, bound to an evil destiny; and looking at him, I think of myself. Because I see we are not other than ghosts, and unsubstantial shadows, all we who live. . . . It is not right to do evil to a dying man even if you hate him." It seems to me that we are here still very far away from love. Wily Ulysses is not wily enough to conceal the motive of his unnatural softening. He pities his enemy because he thinks of himself, remembers that evil could happen also to him, and he pardons his enemy only because he sees him dying and unfortunate.

A wiser man than Ulysses, the son of Sophroniscus, the stone cutter, asked himself, among many other questions, how the righteous man ought to treat his enemies. But reading the texts, we discover with astonishment two Socrates, of different opinions. The Socrates of the Memorabilia frankly accepts the common feeling. Friends are to be treated well and enemies ill, and thus it is better to anticipate one's enemies in doing ill: "The man most greatly to be praised," he says to Cherocrate, "is he who anticipates his enemies in hurtfulness and his friends in helpfulness." But Plato's Socrates does not accept the common opinion. He says to Crito, "Injustice should be rendered to no one in return for injustice; nor evil for evil whatever has been the injury that thou hast received." And he affirms the same principle in the Republic, adding in support that the bad are not bettered by revenge. But the ruling idea in Socrates' head is the thought of justice, not the feeling of love. In no case should the righteous man do evil, out of self-respect (notice this), not out of affection towards his enemy. The bad man must punish himself, otherwise the judges in the lower world will punish him after death. Aristotle, the disciple of Plato, turns tranquilly back to the old idea: "Not to resent offenses," he says in the Ethics to Nicomachus, "is the mark of a base and slavish man."

In Greece, therefore, there is little to the purpose for those who are looking for precedents for Christianity.

But in order to make us believe that Christianity existed before Christ, those who deny Jesus, have found a rival to Jesus even in Rome, in the very palace of the Cæsars. Seneca, the director of conscience to young gentlemen, leader of the fashionable cult of reformed stoicism; the abstract aristocrat never moved by the troubles of the poor; the proprietor who despises riches, and clutches them tightly, who affirms the equality between free and slave, and owns slaves; the talented anatomist of scruples, of evils, of active vices, and complacent virtues; he who canalized the old doctrine of Chrisippus, dull but clear, towards the estuary of preciosity; moral Seneca they claim was a Christian without knowing it during Christ's very lifetime. Thumbing over his works (many were written after the death of Christ, for Seneca waited till he was sixty-five years old before committing suicide), they have found that "the wise man does not avenge but forgets affronts," and that "to imitate the Gods we should do good also to the ungrateful because the sun shines equally on the wicked and the seas bear up the pirate ship," and finally that "We must succor our enemies with a friendly hand." But the "forgetting" of the philosopher is not "forgiveness"; and "succor" can be philanthropy but is not love. The imperious, the stoic, the Pharisee; the philosopher proud of his philosophy, the righteous man complacent over his righteousness, can despise the affronts of the small, the pricks of enemies, and through pride of magnanimity and to win admiration can deign to give a loaf to a hungry enemy in order to humiliate him more harshly from the heights of perfection. But that bread was prepared with the leaven of vanity and that would-be friendly hand could never have dried a tear or dressed a wound.

The world of antiquity did not know love. It knew passion for a woman, friendship for a friend, justice for the citizen, hospitality for the foreigner; but it did not know love. Zeus protected pilgrims and strangers; he who knocked at the Grecian door was not denied meat, a cup of wine, and a bed. The poor were to be covered, the weak helped, the mourning consoled with fair words; but the men of antiquity did not know love, love that suffers, that shares another's sorrow, love for all who suffer and are neglected, love for the poor, the lowly, the outlawed, the maligned, the downtrodden, the abandoned; love for all, love which knows no difference between fellow-citizens and strangers, between fair and foul, between criminal and philosopher, between brother and enemy.

In the last canto of the Iliad we see an old man, a mourner, a father who kisses the hand of his most terrible enemy, of the man who has killed his sons, who has just killed his most loved son. Priam, the old king, head of the rich, ruined city, father of fifty sons, kneels at the feet of Achilles, the greatest hero, and the most unhappy among the Greeks, son of the Sea-Goddess, avenger of Patroclus, slayer of Hector. The white head of the kneeling old man is bowed before the proud youth of the victor, and Priam mourns for the slain, strongest, fairest, most loved of all his fifty sons, and kisses the hand of the slayer! "Thou also," he says, "hast a grey-haired, failing, defenseless, far-distant father. In the name of thy father's love, give me back at least the dead body of my son."

Achilles, the fierce, the wild, the slaughterer, puts the suppliant gently on one side and begins to weep; and both of them, the two enemies, the conqueror and the conquered, the father bereft of his son and the son who will never see his father again, the white-haired old man and the golden-haired youth both weep, drawn together for the first time by sorrow. The others round about gaze at them silent and astounded: we ourselves after thirty centuries are shaken by their grief.

But in the kiss of Priam there is no pardon, there is no love. This king humbles himself to obtain a difficult and unusual favor. If a God had not inspired him he would not have stirred from Ilium; and Achilles does not weep for dead Hector, for weeping Priam, for the powerful man who is brought to humble himself, for the enemy who is brought to kiss the hand of the slayer. He weeps over his lost friend; over Patrocles, dearer to him than all other men; over Peleus, left at Phthia; over his father, whom he will never more embrace, for he knows that his young days are numbered. And he gives back to the father the dead body of his son—that body which he has dragged for so many days in the dust—because it is the will of Zeus, not because his hunger of vengeance is stilled. Both of them weep for themselves; the kiss of Priam is a harsh necessity, the restitution of Achilles is obedience to the Gods. In the noblest heroic world of antiquity there is no place for that love which destroys hate and takes the place of hate, for love stronger than the strength of hate, more ardent, more implacable, more faithful, for love which is not forgetfulness of wrong, but love of wrong, because wrong is a misfortune for him who commits it rather than for him who suffers. There is no place for love for enemies in the world of antiquity.

Jesus was the first to speak of such love, to conceive of such love. This love was not known till the Sermon on the Mount. This is the greatest and the most original of Jesus' conceptions. Of all His teachings this was the newest to men, this is still His greatest innovation. It is new even to us, new because it is not understood, not imitated, not obeyed; infinitely eternal like truth.

THOU SHALT LOVE

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." A few bare, plain words! But they are the Magna Charta of the new race, of the third race, of men not yet born. The first race was that of the animal without law, and its name was War; the second were barbarians tamed by the Law, whose highest perfection was justice. This is the race living now, and justice has not yet conquered War, and the Law has not yet supplanted animality. The third is to be the race of real men, not only upright but holy, not like beasts but like God.

Jesus had just one aim: to transform men from beasts to saints by means of love. Circe, the enchantress, the Satanic consort of the old mythologies, converted heroes into beasts by means of animal pleasures. Jesus is the anti-Satan, the anti-Circe, He who saves from animality by a force more powerful than pleasure. This undertaking, which seems hopeless to all animals barely risen above animality and to beings just entering upon real humanity, must be based on the imitation of God. To approximate sanctity one must look toward divinity: "Be holy because God is holy. Be perfect because God is perfect."

This is not the first time that this appeal has been made to the heart of man. Satan said in the Garden: "You will be as gods." Jehovah said to His judges: "Be gods, be just as God is just." But now there is no question of being wise like God, nor is it even enough to be just, like God. God is now more than wisdom and justice. With Jesus, He becomes our Father, becomes love. His earth gives bread and flowers even to the homicide; he who takes His name in vain sees the glorious sun every morning, the same sun which warms the clasped hands of the laborer praying in the field. A true father loves the son who turns from him as he loves the son who seeks him out; a father cherishes the child who obeys him in his house, or who vomits him out with his wine. A father can be saddened, can suffer, can mourn, but no sinning man is capable of making a father become like to himself. No one can induce a father to take revenge.

And we who are so much lower than God, poor finite creatures, who are scarcely capable of remembering yesterday, who do not know to-morrow, we unfortunate, inferior creatures, have we not many more motives to feel for our brothers in wretchedness what God feels for us? God is the supreme substance of our ideal. To draw away from Him, not to be as we pray that He may be with us, is this not to draw away from our unique destination, to keep perpetually and despairingly out of our reach that happiness for which we are created, which we believe to be the aim of our lives, imagined by us, dreamed of by us, longed-for, invoked and followed in vain through all the false felicities which are not of God? "Let us be Gods," cries Bossuet. "Let us be Gods. He permits it, that we may imitate His holiness."

Who will refuse to be like God? Dii estis. Divinity is in us; animality hampers and constricts it, stunting our growth. Who would not wish to be God? Oh, men, are you in very truth content to be only men? Men as you are to-day, half-men, half-beasts? Centaurs without robustness, sirens without sweetness, demons with fauns' muzzles and goats' feet? Are you so satisfied with your bastard and imperfect humanity, with your animality scarcely held in leash, taking no step to win holiness save to desire it? Does it seem to you that the life of men as it has been in the past, as it is to-day, is so dear, so happy, so contented that there should be no effort to make it otherwise, entirely different, the opposite of what it is, more like that which for thousands of years we have imagined in the future and in Heaven? Is it not possible to make another life out of this life, to change this world to a world more divine, at last to bring down Heaven and the laws of Heaven upon earth?

This new life, this earthly but celestial world is the Kingdom of Heaven, and to bring about the Kingdom we must transfigure and deify ourselves; become like God, imitate God. The secret of the imitation of God is love, the certain way of the transfiguration is love, love of man for man, love for friend and enemy. If this love is impossible, our salvation is impossible. If it is repugnant, it is a sign that happiness is repugnant to us. If it is absurd, our hopes of redemption are only absurdity. Common sense tells us that to love our enemies is insanity, and to count such love as a prerequisite of our salvation seems simple madness. Love for enemies is like hatred for ourselves; hence it follows that we can only earn beatitude by hating ourselves.

This conclusion should alarm no one, for it has been proved; all the experiments have been tried. It is not true that there has been no time to test it. For thousands of years we have been proving and proving it, over and over. We have tried the experiment of fierceness; and blood answered blood. We have tried the experiment of lust; and lust has left in the mouth the odor of corruption and a fiercer fever. We have forced the body into the most refined and perverse pleasures and found ourselves worn out and heavy-hearted, lying upon filth. We have tried the experiment of the Law, and we have not obeyed the Law; we have changed it and disobeyed it again, and Justice has not satisfied our hearts. We have tried the experiment of intellectualism, we have taken the census of creation, numbered the stars, described the plants, the dead things and the living things, we have bound them together with the thin threads of abstract ideas, we have transfigured them in the magic clouds of metaphysics; and at the end of all this, things have remained the same, eternally the same; they were not enough for us, they could not be renewed; their names and their numbers did not quiet our hunger, and the most learned men ended with weary confessions of ignorance. We have tried the experiment of art and our feebleness has brought the strongest to despair, because the Absolute cannot be fixed in any form; the Many overflow from the One; the carefully wrought work of art cannot arrest the ephemeral. We have tried the experiment of wealth and have found ourselves poorer; the experiment of force and have come to ourselves, weaker. In no thing has our soul found quiet. We have found no welcoming shade, where our bodies can lie down and be at rest; and our hearts, always seeking, always disappointed, are older, weaker, and emptier because in nothing have they found peace, because no pleasure has brought them joy, no conquest, happiness.

THE LAST EXPERIMENT

Jesus proposes His experiment, the only remaining possibility, the experiment of love, that experiment which no one has made, which few have even attempted (and that for only a few moments of their lives), the most arduous, the most contrary to our instincts but the only one which can give what it promises.

As he comes from the hand of Nature, Man thinks only of himself, loves nothing but himself. Little by little, with tremendous but slow efforts, he succeeds in loving for a while his woman, and his children, in tolerating his accomplices in the hunt, in assassination and in war. Very rarely is he able to love a friend; more easily he hates the man who loves him. He does not dream of loving the man who hates him.

All this explains why Jesus commands us to love our enemies. To make over the entire man, to create a new man, the most tenacious center of the old man must be destroyed. From self-love come all the misfortunes, massacres and miseries of the world. To tame the old Adam self-love must be torn out of him, and in its place must be put the love most opposed to his present nature, love for his enemies. The total transformation of man is such a sublime paradox that it can be reached only by fantastic means. It is an extraordinary undertaking, wild and unnatural, to be accomplished only with an extraordinary exaltation, opposed to Nature.

Until now man has loved himself and hated those who hate him; the man of the future, the inhabitant of the Kingdom, must hate himself and love those who hate him. To love one's neighbor as one's self is an insufficient formula, a concession to universal egotism. For he who loves himself cannot perfectly love others, and finds himself perforce in conflict with others. Only hatred for ourselves is sufficient. If we love ourselves, we admire ourselves, we flatter ourselves too much. To overcome this blind love, we need to see our nothingness, our baseness, our infamy. Hatred of ourselves is humility, is the beginning of improvement, of perfection. And only the humble shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven because they alone feel how far they are from it. We are angered at others because our dear ego feels undeservedly offended, not sufficiently served by others; we kill our brother because he seems an obstacle to *our* good; we steal for the love of *our* body, we fornicate to give pleasure to our body; envy, mother of rivalry and of wars, is merely sorrow because another has more than we, or has what we have not; pride is the expression of our certainty of being of more account than others, of possessing more than others, of knowing more than others. All the things which religions, morals, and laws call sins, vices, and crimes begin in self-love, in the hatred for others which springs out of that one solitary, disordered love.

What right have we to hate our enemies, when we ourselves have been guilty of the same fault for which we think we have the right to hate them; when we ourselves have been guilty of hatred? What right have we to hate them, even if they have done wrong, even if we believe them wicked, when we ourselves nearly always have done the same wrong actions, have been defiled with the same pitch? What right have we to hate them if nearly always we are responsible for their hate? We, who with the endless errors of our monstrous self-love, have forced them to hate us? And he who hates is unhappy, is the first to suffer. We ought to respond with love to that hatred, with gentleness to that harshness as reparation for the suffering of which we are often the real cause, immediate or distant.

Our enemy is also our savior. We ought every day to be grateful to our enemies; they alone see clearly and state openly what is ignoble in us; they make us conscious of our moral poverty, the realization of which is the only beginning for the second birth. For this service we owe them love. For our enemy needs love, and needs our love. He who loves us already has his joy and reward in himself. He needs no reward from us. But he who hates is unhappy; hates because he is unhappy. His hatred is the bitter outlet for his sufferings. We are partly guilty for this suffering, and even if, over-confident in our innocence, we do not feel that we are responsible, we ought nevertheless to comfort with love the unhappiness of the man who hates, to calm him, make him better, convert him also to the beatitudes of loving. We will know him better if we love him, and knowing him better, we will love him more. We only love heartily what we know well. If we love our enemy, his soul will be transparent to us, and as we penetrate further into it, we will discover much more to call forth our pity and our love; because every enemy is an unrecognized brother; we often hate in him what resembles our own natures. Something of ourselves, unknown perhaps to us, is in our enemy and is often the cause of our hostility. When we love our enemies we purify our spirit by understanding and lift his spirit upward. Hatred, instead of driving men apart, may thus engender a light that liberates men's souls. The worst of evil may bring about the highest good.

This is the reason why Jesus commands us to reverse the ordinary and customary relations of men. When man loves what he now hates, and hates what he now loves, he will be the opposite of what he is to-day. And if life now is made up of evils and despair, the new, changed life being the opposite of what we now have, will be all goodness and consolation. For the first time we shall know happiness; the Kingdom of Heaven will begin on earth. We will find that eternal Paradise, lost because the first men wished to learn the difference between good and evil. But for absolute love like the love of God the Father, there is neither good nor evil. Evil is overwhelmed by the good. Paradise was love, love between man and God, between man and woman. The new earthly paradise, the paradise regained, will be the love of every man for all men. Christ is He who leads Adam back to the gates of the garden, teaches him how he can enter and live there always.

The descendants of Adam have not believed Christ; they have repeated His words but have not obeyed them, and because their hearts are stubborn, men are still groaning in an earthly Hell, which century by century goes on becoming more infernal. When the torments finally become unendurable, then the damned themselves will suddenly learn to hate hatred, the dying rebels in the extremity of their despair will learn to love their executioners. Then, at last, from the depths of sorrowful gloom will shine out the pure splendor of a miraculous spring.

OUR FATHER

The apostles asked Jesus for a prayer. He had told them to pray briefly and secretly, but they were not satisfied with any prayers recommended by the lukewarm, bookish priests of the Temple. They wanted a prayer of their own which would be like a countersign among the fraternity of Christ. Jesus on the Mount taught for the first time the Pater-noster, the only prayer which He ever taught. It is one of the simplest prayers in the world, the most profound which goes up from human homes to God, a prayer neither literary nor theological—neither bold nor servile—the most beautiful of all prayers. But though the Lord's Prayer is simple, it is not always understood. The century-old, mechanical reiteration of tongues and lips, the formal ritual repetition, have made it almost a string of syllables from which the original meaning has been lost. Reading it over word for word to-day like a new text, which we read for the first time, it loses its ritual banality, and freshens into its first meaning.

"Our Father"; for we have sprung from Thee and love Thee as sons; from Thee we shall receive no wrong.

"Which art in heaven"—in that which is opposed to the earth, in the opposite sphere from matter, in spirit and in that small but eternal part of the spirit which is our soul.

"Hallowed be Thy name"; let us not only adore Thee with words but be worthy of Thee, drawing nearer to Thee with greater love, because Thou art no longer the avenger, the Lord of Battles, but the Father who teaches the joyfulness of peace.

"Thy Kingdom come"—the Kingdom of Heaven, of the spirit of love, that of the Gospel.

"Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven"—may Thy law of goodness and of perfection rule both spirit and matter, both the visible and invisible universe.

"Give us this day our daily bread"; because our material body, necessary support of the spirit, needs every day a little material food to maintain it. We do not ask of Thee riches, dangerous burden, but only that small amount which permits us to live, to become more worthy of the promised life. Man does not live by bread alone, and yet without a morsel of bread the soul, living in the body, could not nourish itself on other things more precious than bread.

"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Pardon us because we pardon others. Thou art our eternal and infinite creditor. We can never pay our debt to Thee, but remember that because of our weakness, it is more of an effort for us to forgive one single debt of a single one of our debtors than it is for Thee to sweep away the record of all that we owe Thee.

"Lead us not into temptation." We are weak, still snared in fleshliness in this world which at times seems so beautiful and calls us to all the delights of faithlessness. Help us that our struggling transformation may not be too difficult, and that our entry into the Kingdom may not be too long delayed.

"Deliver us from evil"—Thou who art in Heaven, who art spirit, who hast power over evil, over stubborn and hostile matter which surrounds us everywhere, and from which it is hard to free ourselves, Thou enemy of Satan, negation of matter, help us! Our true greatness lies in this victory over evil, over evil which springs up constantly because it will not be truly conquered until all have conquered it. But this decisive victory will be less distant if Thou helpest us with Thy alliance.

With this appeal for aid, the Lord's Prayer ends. In it are none of the tiresome blandishments of Oriental prayers, rigmaroles of adulation and hyperbole which seem invented by a dog, adoring his master with his dog's soul, because his master permits him to exist and to eat. There are none of the querulous, complaining supplications of the Psalmist who asks God for every variety of aid, more often temporal than spiritual, laments if the harvest has not been good, if his fellow-citizens do not respect him, and calls down wounds and arrows on the enemies whom he cannot conquer himself. In the Lord's Prayer the only word of praise is the word "Father"; and that praise is a pledge, a testimony of love. From this father we ask only for a little bread, and we ask in addition the same pardon that we give our enemies; and at the last a valid protection in our fight with evil, the enemy of all, the great wall which hinders our entry into the Kingdom.

He who says "Our Father" is not proud but neither is he humbled; he speaks to his Father with the intimate quiet accent of confidence almost as from one equal to another. He is sure of his love and he knows that his father needs no long speeches to know his desires. "Your Father," says Jesus, "knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him." Thus the most beautiful of all the prayers is a daily calling to mind of all that we need if we are to become like God.

POWERFUL DEEDS

After He had given out the new law of the imitation of God, Jesus came down from the Mount.

One cannot always remain on the heights. The moment we arrive on the summit of a mountain we are fated to descend. Every ascent is a pledge of descent, a promise to come down again. He who has something to say must make himself heard; if he always speaks on the summits, few will stay with him; it is cold on the summits for those who are not all on fire; and his voice will reach few. He who has come to give, cannot ask men, weak lungs, tired hearts, nerveless legs, to follow him upward, hobbling along to the heights. He must follow them down to the plain, into their houses; he must stoop to them if he is to lift them up.

Jesus knew that exalted teaching on the heights would not suffice to spread the good news to all. He knew that men need less abstract words, picture-making words, narrated words, words almost as tangible as facts. And He knew that even these words would not be enough.

The simple, rustic, coarse, humble people who followed Jesus were men whose lives were based on material things, men who could only understand spiritual things slowly, with great effort, through material proofs, signs and material symbols. They could not understand a spiritual truth without its material incarnation; without evidence simple enough for them to weigh, evidence stated in the terms of the everyday world. An illustrative fable can lead men to moral revelation; a prodigy is to them confirmation of a new truth, of a contested mission. Preaching, made up of abstract axioms and aphorisms, left these imaginative Orientals unsatisfied. Jesus had recourse to the marvelous and to poetry: he performed miracles and spoke in parables. For many moderns the miracles recounted by the Evangelists are a compelling reason for turning away from Jesus and the Bible. Their shriveled brains cannot take in the miraculous; therefore, they reason the Gospel lies, and if it lies in so many places none of it can be believed. It is out of the question that Jesus can ever have raised the dead: therefore, His words have no value.

The people who reason in this way reason ill. They give to miracles a weight and a meaning much greater than that which Jesus gave them. If they had read the four Gospels they would have seen that Jesus is always reluctant to perform miracles, that He does not feel this divine power of His is of supreme importance. Every time that He finds a fair reason for refusing, He refuses; if He yields, it is to reward the faith of the sorrowing man or woman who calls on Him; but the Gospels show that for Himself, for His own salvation, He never performs miracles. He performs no miracles in the wilderness with Satan, none at Nazareth when they wish to kill Him, none at Gethsemane when they come to arrest Him, nor on the cross when they challenge Him to save Himself. His power is only for others, to benefit His mortal brothers.

There are many who ask for a sign, a sign from Heaven, a sign to persuade the unbelievers that His word is the true word: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the Prophet Jonas." What is this sign? The writers of the gospel who wrote after the resurrection thought that Jonah emerging the third day from the whale symbolizes Jesus emerging the third day from the tomb, but the rest of what Jesus says shows that He meant something else. "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the teaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here." Nineveh did not ask for prodigies: it was converted by the word alone. Men whom Jesus cannot convert by truths infinitely greater than those announced by Jonah, are below the level of the men of Nineveh, idolaters, barbarians. Faith must not rest on marvels alone, nevertheless let us remember that faith—though it is higher and more perfect when achieved without miracles—can by its very fervor accomplish miracles. Hardened hearts, locked shut against truth, are not converted even by the greatest miracles. "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." He was neglected and rejected by the cities which were the scenes of the greatest prodigies. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, in sack-cloth and ashes."

Jesus never held that miracles were His exclusive privilege. When they came to tell Him that some man was driving out Demons in His name, He answered, "Forbid him not." This power was not denied to the disciples. "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give."

Even charlatanical wizards could perform prodigies which seemed miracles. In His time a certain Simon was doing miracles in Samaria; even the disciples of the Pharisees performed miracles. But miracles are not enough to enter into the Kingdom. "Many shall say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Thy name and in Thy name cast out devils, and in Thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity." It is not enough to cast out devils, if thou has not cast out the devil in thee, the devil of pride and cupidity.

Even after His death men will see others perform miracles. "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." I have put you on your guard: do not believe in these signs and these wonders until thou shalt see the Son of Man. The miracles of false prophets do not prove the truth of what they say.

For all these reasons, Jesus abstained, as often as possible, from working miracles, but He could not always resist the pleadings of the sorrowful, and often His pity did not wait for the request. For a miracle is an attribute of faith, and His faith is infinite, and that of the believers very great. But often, as soon as the healing was complete, He asked the ones He had healed to keep it secret. "See thou tell no man; Go thy way." Those who do not listen to the truth of Christ, because they are troubled by the miracles, should remember the profound saying which was addressed to Thomas, "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."

THE BLIND SEE

Men cannot live without three things, bread, health and hope. Deprived of everything else men can—raging and cursing—go on living. But if they have not at least these three, they hasten to summon Death, because without them life is like Death. It is death with suffering added, an aggravated, embittered, envenomed death, without even the anæsthetic of insensibility. Hunger is the wasting away of the body; pain makes the body hateful; despair—not to expect anything better, a relief, an alleviation—takes the savor out of everything, takes away every reason to be, and every reason to act. There are men who do not kill themselves because suicide is an action.

He who wishes to draw men to him must give them bread, health and hope. He must feed them, heal them and give them faith in a more beautiful life.

Jesus gives this faith. To those who followed Him into the wilderness and upon the mountains, He distributed material and spiritual bread. He was not willing to transform stones into loaves, but He made the real loaves of bread sufficient for thousands. And the stones which men carry in their breasts He changed into loving hearts.

And He did not reject the sick. Jesus is no self-tormentor, no flagellant. He does not believe that pain is necessary to conquer evil. Evil is evil and must be driven away, but pain also is evil. Sorrow of the soul is enough for salvation: why should the body suffer also, needlessly? The old Jews thought of sickness as a punishment: Christians believe it above all as an aid to conversion.

But Jesus does not believe in vengeance taken on the innocent, and does not expect that true salvation can be won by ulcers or by hair shirts. Render unto the body that which is the body's due, and unto the soul that which is the soul's. He likes the friendly supper-table; He does not refuse good old wine; and He does not send away women who pour perfumes on His head and on His feet. Jesus can fast many days; He can be satisfied with a bit of bread, with half of a broiled fish; and He can sleep on the ground with His head on a stone; but till it is unavoidable He does not seek out want, hunger and suffering. Health seems to Him a good thing and the innocent pleasure of dining with friends; a cup of wine drunk in good company, the fragrance of a vase of nard, seem good and acceptable to Him also when such things cause no suffering to others.

If a sick man accosts Him, He cures him. Jesus comes not to deny life, but to affirm it, to institute a happier and more perfect life. He does not purposely seek out the sick. His mission is to drive away spiritual suffering, to bring spiritual joy. But if, by the way, it happens to Him to drive out also suffering of the flesh, to quiet pain, to restore, along with the health of the soul, the health also of the body, He cannot refuse to do it. He shows Himself adverse to it, for the most part, because His aim is higher; and He would not wish to appear in the eyes of the people like a vagabond wizard, or like the worldly Messiah whom most men were expecting. But since He wishes to conquer evil, and there are men who know Him capable of conquering all evils, His love is forced to drive out also those of the body.

When, on the road trodden by men of health, there come towards Him groups of lepers, repellent, disfigured, horrible lepers, and when He sees that swollen lividness, the scaly skin showing through the torn clothes, that scabby, spotted, cracked skin, the withered, wrinkled skin which deforms the mouth, half-closes the eyes, and puffs up the hands; wretched, suffering ghosts, shunned by every one, separated from every one, disgusting to every one, who are thankful if they have a little bread, a saucer for their water, the roof of an old shed for a hiding-place; when painfully bringing out the words through their swollen, ulcerated lips they beg Him, whom they know to be powerful in word and deed, beg Him, their only hope in their despair, for health, for a cure, for a miracle, how could Jesus shun them, as other men did, and ignore their prayer?

And the epileptics, who writhe in the dust, their faces twisted in a set spasm, the froth on their lips; those possessed of devils who howl among the ruined tombs, evil dogs of the night, disconsolate; the paralytics, trunks which have just enough feeling left to suffer, dead bodies inhabited by an imprisoned and suppliant soul; and the blind, the awful blind, shut up from their birth in the night—foretaste of the blackness of the tomb—stumbling in the midst of the fortunate men who go their way freely, the terrified blind, who walk with their heads held high, their eyes staring, as if the light could reach them from the depths of the infinite, the blind, for whom the world is only a series of more or less harsh surfaces, among which they grope; the blind, eternally alone, who know the sun only by its warmth, by the heat on their bodies! How could Jesus answer "No" to such wretchedness?

THE ANSWER TO JOHN

Jesus heals the sick, but He is in no way like a wizard or an exorcist. He has no recourse to incantation, to amulets, to smoke, veils and mystery. He does not call to His aid the powers of Heaven or Hell. For Him a word is enough, a strong cry, a gentle accent, a caress. His will is enough, and the faith of the petitioner. To them all He puts the question, "Dost thou believe I can do this?" and when the cure is accomplished, "Go, thy faith hath made thee whole." For Jesus the miracle is the union of two wills for good, the living contact between the faith of the healer and the faith of the one healed. "Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence, to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." Those who have no faith, not even as much as the thousandth part of a grain of mustard seed, swear that no man has this power, and that Jesus is an impostor.

In the Gospels the miracles are called by three names: "Dunameis"—forces; "Terata"—marvels; "Semeis"—signs. They are signs for those who remember the prophecies of the Messiah; they are "marvels" for those who look for proofs that Christ is the Messiah; but for Jesus and in Jesus there are only "Dunameis," mighty works, victorious lightning-flashes from a superhuman power. The healings of Jesus are two-fold; they are healings not only of bodies but of souls, and it is soul-sickness which Jesus wishes especially to heal, so that the Kingdom of Heaven may be founded also on the earth.

Most sickness is two-fold, mental and physical, and lends itself with singular exactitude to metaphors and allegory. Jesus cured the maimed, the halt, the fevered, a man with the dropsy, a woman with an issue of blood. He healed also a sword-wound—Malchus' ear struck off by Peter on the night of Gethsemane—this only in order that His law . . . "do good to those who wrong you" . . . might be observed to the very last. But Jesus healed more often those possessed by devils, the paralytics, the lepers, the blind, the deaf-mutes. The old name for mental diseases is possession by devils; even Professor Aristotle believed in possession by devils. It was believed that lunatics, epileptics, hysterical patients, were invaded by malign spirits. The contradictory and often merely verbal explanations of the moderns does not invalidate the fact that demoniacs, in many cases, are such in the real sense of the word. This learned and popular explanation lent itself admirably to that allegorical and figurative teaching of which Jesus was so fond. He wished to found the Kingdom of God and supplant that of Satan. It was part of His mission to drive out demons. The difference between bodily disorders and actual malign obsessions was of no importance: between bodily infirmities and spiritual infirmities there is a parallelism of nomenclature, based on real affinity. There is a likeness between the maniac and the epileptic, between the paralytic and the slothful, the vile and the leprous, the blind and he who cannot see the truth, the deaf and he who will not listen to the truth, the cured and the resurrected.

When John, shut up in prison, sent two disciples to ask Jesus if He were the awaited prophet, or whether they should await another, Jesus answered them, "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached." Jesus did not separate the gospel from miraculous cures. They are similar deeds; by that answer he meant that he had cured bodies in order that the souls might be better disposed to receive the gospel.

Those who did not see the light of the sun can now see the light of truth; those who did not hear even the words of men can now hear the words of God; those who were possessed of Satan are freed from Satan; those who were foul and ulcerated are clean as children; those who could not move, who were strengthless and shrunken, now follow my footsteps; those who were dead to the life of the soul have risen at a word from me . . . and the poor, after the Good News, are richer than the wealthy. These are my credentials, my letters proving my legitimacy.

Jesus, Healer and Liberator, is not what the bad faith of His modern enemies wish to imagine Him, in order to gild once more their comfortable paganism and to protect it against asceticism. "He is the God," they say, "of the sick, the weak, the dirty, the wretched, the strengthless, the servants." But all that Christ does is to give health, strength, purity, wealth, and liberty. He draws near to the sick precisely in order to drive away their sickness; to the weak to lift them out of their weakness; to the dirty in order to cleanse them; to slaves in order to free them. He does not love the sick only because they are sick: He loves health, just as the men of antiquity did, and He loves it so greatly that He longs to give it back to those who have lost it. Jesus is the prophet of happiness, the promiser of life, of life that is worthier to be lived. The miracles are only pledges of His promise.

TALITHA QUMI

"The dead shall arise!" This is one of the signs which are to suffice for John the Baptist in prison. To the good sister, to the hard-working Martha, Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die." The resurrection is a rebirth in faith, immortality is the permanent affirmation of this faith.

The Evangelists know three resurrections, historical events narrated with a sober but explicit statement of the evidence. Jesus raised up three who were dead: a young lad, a little girl, and a friend.

He was entering Nain, "the beautiful" set on a little hill some miles from Nazareth, and met a funeral procession. They were carrying to the grave the young son of a widow. She had lost her husband a short time before; this son alone had been left to her; now they were carrying away the son in turn for burial. Jesus saw the mother walking among the women, weeping with the amazed and smothered grief of mothers which is so profoundly moving. She had only two men in all the world who loved her; the first one was dead, the second was now dead; one after the other, both of them disappeared. She was left alone, a woman alone without a man. Without a husband, without a son, without a help, a prop, a comfort. Gone the love that was a memory of youth, gone the love that was hope for declining years. Gone both those poor, simple loves. A husband can console his wife for the loss of their son; a son can make up for the loss of a husband. If only one had been left! Now her lips were never to know another kiss.

Jesus had compassion on this mother; her grief was like an accusation. "Weep not," he said.

He went to the side of the cataleptic and touched him. The boy was lying there stretched out, wrapped in his shroud, but with his face uncovered, set in the stern paleness of the dead. The bearers halted; all were silent; even the mother, startled, was quiet.

"Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother. He "delivered" him because he was now hers. Jesus had taken him from the land of death to give him back to her who could not live without him, that a mother might cease from weeping.

Another day as he was returning from Gadara, a father fell at His feet. His only little daughter lay at the point of death. The man's name was Jairus, and although he was a leader at the Synagogue he believed in Jesus. They went along together. When they were half-way, a servant met them, saying, "Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master." But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, "Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole." And when He came into the house He suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden. And all wept, and bewailed her: but He said, "Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth." And they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And He put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, "Maid, arise." And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and He commanded to give her meat. She was not a visible spirit, a ghost, but a living body, awakened a little weak, ready for a new day after feverish dreams.

LAZARUS AWAKENED

Lazarus and Jesus loved each other. More than once Jesus had eaten in his house at Bethany with him and his sisters. Now one day Lazarus fell ill, and sent word of it to Jesus. And Jesus answered, "This sickness is not unto death." Two days went by. But on the third day He said to His disciples, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." He was near to Bethany when Martha came to meet Him as if to reproach Him.

"Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died." And a little later Mary too said, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Their repeated reproach touched Jesus, not because He feared He had come too late, but because He was always saddened by the lack of faith even of those dearest to Him.

"And he said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. . . . Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone."

Martha, the housekeeper, the practical, concrete character, interrupted, "Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days." But Jesus did not heed her, "Take away the stone." And the stone was rolled away. Jesus made a short prayer, His face lifted towards the sky, drew near to the hole and called His friend in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth."

And Lazarus came forth, stumbling, for his hands and feet were shrouded and his face covered with a napkin.

"Loose him, and let him go."

And all four, followed by the Twelve and by a throng of thunderstruck Jews, returned to the house. Lazarus' eyes grew wonted again to the light. He walked on his feet, although with pain, and used his hands. Martha, moving rapidly, got together the best dinner she could in the confusion after four days of demoralized sorrow—and the man come back to life after death ate with his sister and his friends. Mary could scarcely swallow a mouthful of food, nor take her eyes from the conqueror of death, who, having wiped the tears from His eyes, broke His bread and drank His wine as if this day were like any other day.

These are the resurrections narrated by the Evangelists, and from their account we can draw some observations which will allow us to dispense with learned, that is to say with unsuitable, commentaries. In all His life, Jesus raised from the dead only three persons, and this He did, not to make a show of His power and to strike the imagination of the people, but only because He was touched by the sorrow of those who loved the dead, to console a mother, a father, two sisters. Two of these resurrections were public; one, that of the daughter of Jairus, was accomplished in the presence of very few, and Jesus asked those few to say nothing about it.

Another point, and the most important; in all these three cases Jesus spoke to the dead person as if he were not dead but only asleep. He had no time to say anything about the condition of the son of the widow, because that decision was taken too rapidly, but even to him, He said, as to a child, idly oversleeping, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." When they told Him that the daughter of Jairus was dead, He answered, "Weep not, she is not dead but sleepeth." When they confirmed the news of the death of Lazarus, He insisted, "He is not dead but sleepeth." He made no claim to bring back from the dead, only to awaken. Death for Him was only a sleep, a deeper sleep than the common sleep of everyday, a sleep only to be broken by a superhuman love. This love was for the survivors more than for the dead; it was the love of one whose tears flow at the sight of others' tears.

THE MARRIAGE AT CANA

Jesus liked to go to weddings. For the man of the people who very seldom gives way to lavishness and gayety, who never eats and drinks as much as he would like, the day of his wedding is the most remarkable of all his life, a rich passage of generous gayety in his long, drab, commonplace existence. Wealthy people who can have banquets every evening, moderns who gulp down in a day what would have sufficed for a week to the poor man of olden times, no longer feel the solemn joyfulness of that day. But the poor man in the old days, the workingman, the countryman, the Oriental who lived all the year round on barley-bread, dried figs and a few fish and eggs, and only on great days killed a lamb or a kid, the man accustomed to stint himself, to calculate closely, to dispense with many things, to be satisfied with what is strictly necessary, saw in weddings the truest and greatest festival of his life. The other festivals, those of the people and those of the Church, were the same for everybody, and they are repeated every twelfth month; but a wedding was his very own festival and only came once for him in all the cycle of his years.

Then all the delights and splendors of the world were centered around the bride and groom, to make the day unforgettable for them. Torches went at night to meet the groom with singers, dancers and musicians. The house was filled with abundance, all sorts of meats cooked in all sorts of ways; wine-skins of wine leaning against the walls, vases of unguents for the friends; light, music, perfumes, gayety, dancing; nothing was lacking for the gratification of the senses. On that one day all the things which are the daily privilege of princes and rich men triumphed in the poor man's house.

Jesus was pleased by this innocent joy, and touched by the exultation of those simple souls, snatched for those few hours from the gloomy, niggardly poverty of their everyday life. In weddings He saw more than a mere festival. Marriage is the supreme effort of the youth of man to conquer Fate with love, with the union of two affections, with the joining of two loving youths. It is the affirmation of a double faith in life, in the continuity and stability of life. The man who marries is a hostage in the hands of human society. Making himself the head of a new society and father of a new generation, he frees himself while he professes to bind himself. Marriage is a promise of happiness, and an acceptance of suffering. Illusion and conscience have their part in it In the shadow of tragedy, which sends over the future a trembling hope of joy, is the heroic and holy greatness of marriage, which cannot be dispensed with, and yet, in the light of selfish reason, should not be accepted. Who has ever seen, except in this case, a condemnation so eagerly longed for?

For Jesus marriage has a still deeper meaning: it is the beginning of something eternal. Whom God hath joined, man cannot put asunder. When hearts have been united and bodies joined, no law nor sword can sever them. In this our human life, changeable, ephemeral, evasive, failing, frail, there is only one thing that ought to last forever till death and beyond death, —marriage, the only link of eternity in the perishable chain.

Jesus often speaks of weddings and banquets. Among the most beautiful parables is that of the King who sent out invitations to the wedding of his son, that other of the Virgins who wait by night for the arrival of the bridegroom's friend; and that of the Lord who prepared a banquet. Christ compares Himself to a bridegroom feasted by His friends when He answers those who are scandalized because His disciples eat and drink.

He did not despise wine, and when with His Twelve, He drinks that wine which is His blood, He thinks of the new wine of the Kingdom. It is not surprising therefore that He should have accepted the invitation to the wedding at Cana. Every one knows the miracle He wrought that day. Six jars of water were changed by Jesus into wine, and into wine better than that which had been drunk. Old rationalists say that this was a present of wine kept hidden until then, a surprise of Jesus at the end of the meal, in honor of the bride and groom. And six hundred quarts of wine, they add, are a fine present, showing the liberality of the Master.

These Voltairian vermin have not noticed that only John, the man of allegories, the philosophizer, tells of the Marriage at Cana. It was not a sleight-of-hand trick, but a true transmutation, performed with the power of Spirit over matter, and at the same time it is one of those Parables in fact, instead of in words, a Parable told by actual deeds.

But whoever does not stop at the literal meaning of the story, sees that the water turned into wine symbolizes the new epoch which begins with the Gospel. Before the Annunciation and the vigil in the desert, water was enough; the world was left to sorrow. But now the joyful tidings are come, the Kingdom is at hand, happiness is near. Men are about to pass from sadness to joy, from the widowhood of the old law to the new marriage with the new law. The Bridegroom is with us. Now is no time for sadness, but for enthusiasm. There will be no more fasting but rejoicings; no more water but wine.

Remember the words of the steward to the Bridegroom, "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but Thou hast kept the good wine until now." Such was the old usage, the usage of the Jews of old times and of the heathen. But Jesus meant to overturn this old amphictyonic usage also. The men of old gave the good and then the poor; He, after the good wine, gives better. Sour, unripened wine, the poor quality which was drunk at the beginning, symbolizes the wine of the old law, the wine that has turned sour and can no longer be drunk. Christ's wine, finer and stronger, which cheers the heart and warms the blood, is the new wine of the Kingdom, wine intended for the marriage of Heaven and earth, wine which gives that divine intoxication which will be called later, "the foolishness of God."

The marriage of Cana, which in John is the first miracle, is an allegory of the evangelical revolution.

THE ACCURSED FIG-TREE

Another parable expressed in the form of a miracle is that of the withered fig-tree. One morning towards Easter, returning from Bethany to Jerusalem, Jesus was hungry. He came up to a fig-tree and found only leaves. It was too early to expect fruit, even from the earliest species. Yet Jesus, according to Matthew and Mark, was angry at the poor tree and cursed it.

According to Matthew, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever." And presently the fig-tree withered away.

According to Mark, "No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever. . . . And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots."

In the Evangelists the account of the curse is followed by a return to the thought many times expressed by Jesus, that anything can be obtained if asked for with powerful faith.

Others instead see here a metaphorical lament which many times returned to Jesus' lips. The fig-tree is Israel, the old Judaic religion, which from now on will bear only unnourishing leaves of rites and ceremonies, leaves fated to shrivel without nourishing men. Jesus, hungry for justice, hungry for love, sought among the leaves for sustaining fruits of mercy and holiness. He did not find them. Israel did not feed His hunger nor fulfill His hope. From now on nothing can be expected from the old trunk, leafy but sterile. May it be dead to all eternity! Other races will henceforth be fruitful.

The miracle of the cursed fig-tree is at bottom nothing more than a very apparent gloss of the parable of the sterile fig-tree in Luke. "A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?"

And he answering said unto him, "Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."

The tree was not condemned at first, but after three years of sterility, and even then by the intercession of the workman, was given a year's respite, and in that year the plant was handled and treated with loving care. That was to be the final test: only if all care was unavailing was it to be hewn down and burned.

For three years Jesus had preached to the Jews, and He was thinking of giving them up, and announcing the Kingdom to others. But one of His workers, a disciple still attached to his people, asked for mercy; one respite more. We shall see whether even great love could convert this adulterous and bastard generation. But when they were on the road from Bethany, Judaism had been put to the test, Christ had only His Cross to expect. The evil fig-tree of Judaism deserved to be burned and from that time on no one will eat its tardy, withered fruit.

BREAD AND FISHES

On two occasions there was a multiplication of bread, alike in all details except the proportions of the quantities involved, —that is, in exactly what give them their real spiritual meaning.

Thousands of poor people had followed Jesus into a place in the wilderness, far from any settlements. For three days they had not eaten, so hungry were they for the bread of life which is His word. But on the third day, Jesus took pity on them—there were women and children among them—and ordered His disciples to feed the multitude. But they had only a little bread and a few fishes, and there were thousands of mouths. Then Jesus had them all sit down on the ground on the green grass, in circles of fifty to a hundred, He blessed the small amount of food they had; all were satisfied, and baskets of the broken pieces were left.

The less there is of the true bread, the bread of truth, the more it satisfies. The old law is abundant, copious, divided into innumerable sections. There are hundreds of precepts written in the books and thousands more invented by the Scribes and Pharisees. At first sight it seems a gigantic table where a whole race could be satisfied. But all these precepts, these rules and formulas are only dry leaves, shavings, trash. No one can live on such fare. The more numerous they are, the less they satisfy. Humble and simple people cannot satisfy their hunger for justice with these innumerable but inedible viands. Instead, one Word alone sums up all the words and transcends the petrified bigotry beloved by the complacent and satiated; one Word which fills the soul, which reconciles hearts, which calms the hunger for justice; the multitudes will be satisfied and there will be enough to eat also for those who were not present on that day. Spiritual bread is in itself miraculous. A loaf of wheat bread is only enough for a very few, and when they have finished it, there is no more for any one! But the bread of truth, that mystic bread of Joy is never finished, can never be finished. Give it out to thousands and it is always there; distribute it to millions, and it is always intact. Every one has taken his part as the men and women in the wilderness did, and as much as was given out, so much the more remains for those who are to come.

Another day when the disciples found themselves without bread, Jesus admonished them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. And the disciples, almost always slow to understand Him, said among themselves, "It is because we have taken no bread." Which when Jesus perceived he said unto them, "O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?" That is, of the blind guardians of the degenerate law.

They are the Twelve, the chosen, the blest, the faithful, and yet they cannot understand at once, do not sufficiently believe.

Again in the boat, the night of the tempest, Jesus was obliged to reprove them. The Master had gone to sleep in the stern, His head on the pillow of one of the rowers. Suddenly the wind rose, a storm came down on the lake, the waves beat against the boat and it seemed from one moment to the next that they would be wrecked. The disciples, alarmed, awakened Jesus, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, "Peace, be still." And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. And He said unto them, "Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?" And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

There is one, Simon Peter, who has no fear. Not only does his nature transcend the human, but great is his faith, great his love, great his power of will. Nothing animate nor inanimate can resist these three great qualities. A man who possesses them has renounced all that is temporal and is victorious over time. He has renounced the good things of the flesh, and for this reason can save the flesh; he has renounced material things and so is master of matter. Every one can partake of this power. Faith is sufficient, but it must not be faith only in oneself.

A few years before Christ, a great Italian, captain in many wars, corrupt but a fitting ruler over the putrefaction of the Republic, was on the sea, on a real sea, in a boat with a few rowers, in search of an army which had not come up in time to win the victory for him. The wind began to blow, the tempest bore down on the boat and the pilot wished to turn back to the harbor. But Cæsar, taking the hand of the pilot, said to him, "Go forward, fear not, Cæsar is with thee and his fortune sails with you." These words of haughty self-confidence heartened the crew; every one, as if a little of Cæsar's strength had entered into his soul, did his best to overcome the opposition of the sea. But notwithstanding the efforts of the seamen the ship was nearly sunk and was obliged to turn back. Cæsar's faith was only pride and ambition, faith in himself: Christ's faith was all love, love for the Father, love for men.

With this love He could walk to meet the boat of the disciples tacking against a contrary wind, and could step upon the water as on the grass of a meadow. They thought in the darkness that it was a specter, and once again He was obliged to reassure them, "Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid." As soon as He was in the boat, the wind fell and in a few minutes they reached the shore. Once again they were astounded because, says the honest Mark, "For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened."

This comparison may seem ingenuous, but it is revealing, for the miracle of the loaves is the foundation of all the others. Every parable spoken in poetic words or expressed with visible prodigies was as bread prepared in different manners, so that His own followers, at least His very own, should understand the one needful truth that the Spirit is the only fare worthy of man, and that the man who is nourished on that fare is master of the world.

NOT SECRETIVE: A POET

Jesus seems at first sight secretive. He orders those affected by miracles to say to no man who has cured them; He wishes prayers and charity to be done secretly; when the disciples recognize that He is the Christ, He charges them not to repeat it; after the Transfiguration He bids the three keep silence, and when He teaches He uses parables which all men are not capable of understanding.

On further thought, on really considering the matter, it is apparent that Jesus has nothing of the esoteric. He has no secret doctrine to impart to a few acolytes. His words are public and open. He always speaks in the public squares of cities, on the beaches of lakes, in the Synagogue, in the midst of the people. He forbids speaking of His miracles in order that He may not be confused with wizards and exorcists; He commands to do good secretly in order to keep vainglory from destroying merit; He does not wish the Twelve to proclaim Him the Christ before His entry into Jerusalem, the public inauguration of His Messiahship; and He speaks in parables to be better understood by the simple who listen more willingly to a story than to a sermon, and remember a narration better than an argument.

Three of the Evangelists report a speech of Jesus, which seems to contradict this view. "Unto you," He is speaking to the disciples, "it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but to others it is not given; therefore I speak to them in parables that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand."

But Jesus means only to say this, "You understand these mysteries, but the many do not understand them, although they have ears and spirits like yours. And to them that they may understand I speak in parables,—that is, in a figurative language of facts because it is easier and more familiar." You teach children with fables and the simple with stories, and "the many" have remained like the simple and the childish. To overcome the slowness of their minds I use words adapted to their nature. They are all fancy, and little intellect; and the parables are an appeal to the imagination more than to the reasoning powers. I do not employ them therefore to hide the truth, but the better to reveal it to those who could not see it in a purely rational form. For if then they do not understand, it is the fault of their obstinacy, which often closes the eyes and ears of the soul.

Jesus had no mysteries to dissemble. It was His wish that all, even the most humble and ignorant, should understand Him. The parables were not made to hide His teaching from the profane, but to make it more explicit and understandable to every one. That sometimes even the intelligence of the Twelve is inferior to this task is a melancholy conclusion by no means unknown to Jesus.

The marvelous content of His message has cast into the shade His poetic originality, not less marvelous. Jesus never wrote—once only He wrote on the sand, and the wind destroyed forever His handwriting—but in the midst of a people of powerful imagination, of the people who wrote the Psalter, the story of Ruth, the book of Job, the Song of Songs, He would have been one of the greatest poets of all times. His victorious youthfulness of spirit, the racy, popular language of the country where He grew up, the books He had read, few but among the richest of all poetry—His loving communion with the life of the fields and of animals and above all His divine and passionate yearning to give light to those who suffer in the dark, to save those who are being lost forever, to carry supreme happiness to the most unhappy (because true poetry does not catch its fire from the light of the lantern but at the light of the stars and of the sun, is not found in the writings left behind by great-grandfathers, but in love, in sorrow in the deeply moved soul); these things combined made of Jesus a poet, an inventor of living and eternal images with which he achieved a miracle on which the Evangelists make no comment,—the miracle of communicating the highest truth by the means of stories so simple, familiar, full of grace that after twenty centuries they shine with that unique youth which is eternity. Some of these stories are only idyllic or epic restatements of revelations which at other times He expounded in abstract words; but there are some which express things never said in any other form in His teaching. The parables are the imaginative comments on the Sermon on the Mount, such as could be made only by a poet who merits the title of divine more truly than any other poet ever born.

YEAST

City ladies do not make their own bread, but old country-women and housewives know what yeast is. A handful of dough from the last baking as big as a child's hand, wet with warm water and put into the new dough, raises even as much as three measures of flour.

Among the seeds of plants that of the mustard is among the smallest; it can hardly be seen, but from this tiny little seed, if it is put into good earth, springs up a fine shrub, and the fowls of the air lodge in the branches of it. The grain of wheat is not large, the farmer throws it into the ground and then goes on about his other affairs; he sleeps, he goes away from home and comes back. Days pass and nights pass, no thought is given to the seed, but underneath there in the moist, plowed field the seed has germinated. There comes out a blade of green and at the top of this blade an ear, at first green and graceful, then little by little becoming golden grain. Now the field is ready for the mowing and the farmer can commence his harvesting.

Likewise with the Kingdom of Heaven and the first news of it. A word seems nothing. What is a word? Syllables, sounds, which come from the lips, enter with difficulty into the ears and only when they come from the heart find other hearts; it is a little thing, small, a breath, a sigh, a sound which comes and goes and the wind carries it away. And yet the word of the Kingdom is like yeast. If it goes into good flour, clean honest flour not adulterated with other grains, it ferments and grows. It is like the seed of the fields which germinates deep under the ground, patient as the earth which hides it, which, when Spring comes, grows green and strong and with the beginning of summer, lo, the harvest is ready!

The gospel is made up of few words, "The Kingdom is at hand, change your souls!" but if it falls into the heart of men ready for it, of simple men who wish to become great, of righteous men who wish to become holy, of sinners who seek in good for that happiness which they have vainly sought in evil, then those words take root in the depths, put out buds and shoots, flourish up in clusters and ears, and luxuriate in a summer never to be followed by the decay of Autumn.

Only a few men of those living about Christ believed in the Kingdom and prepared themselves for the great day. Only a few, insignificant men, scattered like tiny particles of yeast in the midst of the divided nations and the immense Empires, but these few dozen insignificant men gathered together in the midst of a predestined people were to become, through the contagion of their example, thousands upon thousands, and only three hundred years after them, in the place of Tiberius, ruled a man who bowed the knee before the heirs of the Apostles.

But men must renounce everything else if they are to enjoy the promised Kingdom. Worldly-minded men do the same in their temporal affairs. If a man working in another's field discovers a treasure-store, he quickly hides it again and hurries to sell all that he has to buy that field. If a merchant looking for marvelous jewels worthy to be offered to monarchs, finds a pearl larger and purer than any he has ever seen, he goes and sells everything that he has, even the other pearls of less price, to buy this unique and wonderful pearl.

If the workman and the merchant, material-minded men, who are satisfied with frail acquisitions, are thus ready to sell all their goods to acquire a treasure which seems to them more precious than anything they possess, even though it is only a material and perishable treasure, how much more reason there is for men to renounce what they hold most dear, in order to achieve the Kingdom of God. If the laboring-man and the merchant for a money gain, likely to be stolen or destroyed, thus consent to a provisional sacrifice which will give them a hundred per cent profit, ought not we for an infinitely greater, infinitely higher profit, throw away the best we have, even if it has seemed until now of inestimable price?

But before we make this renunciation we must take thought and be sure that what remains to us will be enough to take us to the end of this new undertaking. We must measure the forces of our soul, that it may not happen to us as to the man who wished to build up a tower, a beautiful tower which would soar up to the sky like that of Jerusalem. He took no account of the cost but called the diggers, had the foundations excavated; called the masons and had the four walls of the foundations begun; but when the tower had scarcely been raised above the level of the earth, and was not yet as high as the roof of a house, he was obliged to stop because he had no more money to pay for the mortar, the stones, the bricks and the working men; and the tower remained thus, low and unsightly, in memory of his presumption: and his neighbors mocked at him.

A king who wants to make war on another king first takes account of his soldiers, and if he can count only on ten thousand and the other has twenty thousand, he puts off any idea of war, and sends an embassy of peace before his enemy can take the first hostile step. He who is not sure of himself, of being able to conquer to the last, does not follow Christ. For the foundation of the Kingdom is infinitely harder work than the building of a tower, and the creation of the new man is war not less harsh than external war, although silent and inner.

THE BANQUET

Only the clean of heart can enter into the Kingdom. The Kingdom is an eternal feast, and only those dressed for a feast can go there. There was a King who celebrated his son's wedding, and those whom he invited did not come. Then the King called in the common people, the passers-by, the beggars, every one; but when the King came into the banqueting hall and saw one of the guests all filthy with grease and mud, he had him cast outside the door, to gnash his teeth in the coldness of night.

At the banquet of the Kingdom if the first called do not come, all are accepted; even the wretched and the sinners. The King had invited first the chosen people; but one had bought a piece of ground, another five yoke of oxen, a third had taken a wife that day. They were all deep in their affairs, and some did not even trouble to send an excuse. Then the King sent his servants to pick up out of the streets the blind, the poor, the maimed and the halt, the lowest of the rabble; and still there was room. Then he commanded that those who passed in front of his palace should be forced to come in, whoever they might be; and the banquet began. It was a royal banquet, a rich and magnificent feast; but after all, it consisted in enjoying lamb and fish, in getting drunk on wine and cider. At the break of day the bonfire was burned out, the tables were cleared, every one had to return to his home and to his poverty. If some of those whom the King first invited preferred another material pleasure to this material pleasure it was pardonable

But the invitation to the banquet of the Kingdom is a promise of spiritual happiness, absolute, satisfying, perpetual. Something else than the passing amusements of terrestrial life: nauseating drunkenness, food that distends the stomach, sensual pleasures that leave a man bone-weary and defiled. And yet the men whom Jesus chose among all other men, and called first of all to the divine feast of the reborn, did not respond. They made wry faces, complained, slipped away and continued their habitual low actions. They preferred the rubbish of carnal goods to the splendor of high hope which is the only reasonable reason for living.

Then all the others were called in their place: beggars instead of the rich, sinners instead of Pharisees, women of the streets instead of fine ladies, the sick and sorrowing instead of the strong and happy.

Even the latest arrivals if they come in time will be admitted to the feast. The master of the vineyard saw in the market-place certain laborers who were waiting for work, sent them out to prune his vines, and agreed on their wages. Later at noon-day he saw others without work and sent also those; and still later more again, and he sent them all. And they all worked, some at pruning and some at hoeing, and when the evening came the master gave the same pay to all. But those who had begun in the morning early, murmured, "Why do those who have worked less than we receive the same payment?" But the master answered one of them and said, "Didst not thou agree with me for a penny; why then dost thou lament? If it is my pleasure to give the same to the working men of the last hour, is that robbing you others?"

The apparent injustice of the master is only a more generous justice. To all he gives what he has promised, and he who arrived last but works with equal hope has the same right as the others to enjoy that Kingdom for which he has labored until the night.

Woe to him who comes too late! No one knows the exact day, but after that hour he who has not gone in will knock at the door, and it will not be opened to him, and he will mourn in outer darkness.

The master has gone to the wedding and the servants do not know when he will come back. Fortunate are those who have waited for him and whom he will find awake. The master himself will seat them at the table and will serve them. But if he find them sleeping, if no one is ready to receive him, if they make him knock at the door before opening it, if they come to meet him disheveled, tousled, half-clad, and if he finds in the house no lamp lighted, no water warmed, he will take the servants by the arm and drive them out without pity.

Every one should be ready because the Son of Man is like a thief in the night who sends no word beforehand when he will come. Or like a bridegroom who has been detained by some one in the street. In the house of the bride there are ten virgins who are waiting to go to meet him with the light of the procession. Five, the wise virgins, take oil for their lamps, and wait to hear the voices and the steps of the approaching bridegroom. The other five, the foolish, do not think of the oil, and, tired of waiting, fall asleep. And suddenly there is the sound of the nuptial procession arriving. The five wise virgins light their lamps and run out into the street joyfully to welcome the bridegroom. The other five wake up with a start and ask their companions to give them a little oil. But the others say, "Why did you not provide for that sooner? Go and buy some." And the foolish run from one house to another to get a little oil; but everybody is asleep, and nobody answers them, and the shops are closed and the roaming dogs bark at their heels. They go back to the house of the wedding, but now the door is closed. The five wise virgins are already there and feasting with the bridegroom. The five foolish virgins knock and beg and cry out, but no one comes to open for them. Through the cracks in the window casings they see the glowing lights of the supper. They hear the clatter of the dishes, the clinking of the cups, the songs of the young men, the sound of the musical instruments, but they cannot enter. They must stay there until morning, in the dark, and the wind. Shut out from the pleasures of the evening festival, they tremble and shake in terror.

THE NARROW GATE

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Those who will try to enter will fail, because the master of the house, when he has shut his door, will no longer recognize any one.

Until the great day, until it is too late, "Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." Even hard, slothful, obstinate men give way to persistent entreaty. If even men are not always insensible to pleadings how much surer will be the response from a Father who loves us?

A man at midnight knocks at the door of a friend and wakens him. Through the door he says to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him." But the other, still half asleep, replies, "Trouble me not: for I am tired, and I do not wish to arise. And here in my bed I have my children who are asleep and if I get up I will wake them and chill them." But the other will not give up, and knocks again on the door and raises his voice and begs with clasped hands that the other one will do him this service, for he has no other friends near, and the hour is late and his guest hungry and waiting for him. And he storms so at the door that his friend gets out of bed and lets him come in and gives him as many loaves as he needs. The friend was weak, but good-hearted. And even the bad-hearted do as he does. There was in a certain city a judge who cared for no one, a morose and scornful man who wanted to do everything as it suited him best. A widow went every day before him and asked for justice, and although her cause was just the judge always sent her away and would not do what she wished. But the widow patiently endured all his repulses and did not weary in her importunity. And finally the judge to get rid of this woman who wore him out with her supplications, pleadings, and prayers, gave the sentence and sent her in peace.

But no more must be asked than can be expected. He who has accomplished his task will eat and drink but will not have any special place of honor, nor will he be better served than his brother, and certainly not so well as his superior. When the servant, having been in the field sowing or pasturing the cattle, comes back to the house, the master does not call him to eat at his own table, but first is served himself and afterwards gives the servant the meal which is due him. This is a Parable which Jesus meant for His Apostles, who were already disputing about who would have the highest place in the Kingdom. "Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which were commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."

The only thing which counts is the actual doing. There are those who say "yes" to orders but who after this do nothing. Such men shall be condemned more severely than those who refused openly and then afterwards, repentant, obeyed. A father had two sons and said to the older, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." And the son answered, "I go, sir," but instead of going to work in the vineyard he lay down in the shade to sleep. And the father said to the second, "Go too and work with your brother." But the son answered, "No, to-day I wish to rest because I am not well." But later, thinking of the old man who could not do the work himself any longer, he took back his refusal, overcame his indolence and went to the vineyard and worked with a will till evening.

To listen to the word of the Kingdom is not enough. To consent verbally and to live just as before, without effort to change the heart, is less than nothing. "Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like; He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock, and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great."

The same teaching is in the Parable of the Sowing, "A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it, and some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up and bare fruit an hundredfold." This is the Parable which the Twelve were incapable of understanding. Jesus was obliged to explain it Himself. The seed is the Word of God.

Those by the wayside are they that hear, then cometh Satan and taketh the Word out of their hearts lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they which when they hear receive the Word with joy, and these have no root which for a while believe and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they which when they have heard go forth and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they which in an honest and good heart having heard the Word keep it and bring forth fruit with patience. But it is not enough to hear it merely, to understand it, to practice it. He who has received it should not keep it to himself. Who is the man who having a lamp hides it under the bed or covers it with a vessel? The light should stand high in the center of the room that they which enter in may see it and be lighted.

A Lord traveling into a far country left to each of his servants ten talents with the understanding that they should use the money to good purpose. And when he came back he reckoned with them. And the first delivered to him twenty talents, because with the first ten he had earned ten other talents. And the Lord made him steward over all his goods. And the second delivered him fifteen talents, for he had not been able to earn more than five more. But the third presented himself timorously and showed him, wrapped up in a napkin, the ten talents which he had received. "Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talents in the earth." And the Lord answered, "Thou wicked and slothful servant, I will judge thee by thine own words. Take the talents and give them to him who has twenty." But he has already plenty. "I say unto you," answered the Lord, "For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." And the unprofitable servant was cast into outer darkness, where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth. He who has received the Word ought to double his wealth.

He has received so great a treasure that if he leaves it useless, he deserves to have it taken away from him. From him who does not add to it shall be taken away even that which he has, and unto him who has doubled his treasures shall be given even more. Those who do not use the treasure of the Word are not poverty-stricken men who need gifts because they are destitute, but faithless and slothful husbandmen, to whom was entrusted the most fruitful field in all the universe. Happy the steward whom the Master shall find attentive to act justly and to give to all their rightful part of the harvest. But if the steward begins to oppress the serving men and women and thinks only of eating and getting drunk he will be scourged and punished when the Master returns, just punishment for the faithless!

The servant who does not know what the Master wishes done, and so, not knowing, does not carry out His wishes, shall be less punished than he who knew, and still does the contrary, for he shall be driven out of the house where he gave orders. The bearers of the Word have no excuse if they are not the first to obey God's wishes. From him to whom much was given, much shall be required.

THE PRODIGAL SON

A man had two sons. His wife was dead, but he still had these two sons, only two. But two are always better than one. If the first is away from home, the second is still there; if the younger fall ill, the older works for two; if one should die . . . even children die, even the young die, and sometimes before the old . . . if one of the two should die, there is at least one left who will care for the poor father.

This man loved his sons, not only because they were of his blood but because he had a loving heart. He loved them both, the older and the younger; perhaps the younger a little more than the older, but so little that he did not realize it himself. Fathers and mothers often have a weakness for the youngest because he is the smallest, he is the sweetest, he is the last baby, and after his birth there was never another one, so that his boyhood, still so recent, so prolonged, stretches out to the sill of his young manhood like a lingering halo of tenderness. It seems only yesterday that he was a baby at the breast, that he took his first stumbling steps, that he sprang up to embrace his father, or sat astride his knees.

But this man was not partial. He loved his sons like his two eyes and his two hands, equally dear, one at the left, one at the right, and he saw to it that both were happy. Nothing lacked for either one.

And yet, even in the case of sons of one father, it almost never happens that two brothers have the same tastes or even similar tastes. The older was a serious-minded young man, sedate, settled, who seemed already grown up and mature, a husband, the head of a family. He respected his father, but more as master than as father, without any impulsive show of affection. He worked faithfully, but he was hard and captious with the servants; he went through all the religious forms, but did not let the poor come about him. Although the house was full of all possible good things, yet for them there was never anything. He pretended to love his brother, but his heart was full of the poison of envy. When people say "to love like a brother" they say the contrary of what ought to be said. Brothers very rarely love each other. Jewish history, not to speak of any other, begins with Cain, goes on with Jacob's cheating Esau, with Joseph sold by his brothers, with Absalom, who killed Amon, with Solomon who had Adonijah killed: a long bloody road of jealousy, opposition and betrayal. It would be more correct to say "a father's love," rather than a brother's.

The second son seemed of another race. He was younger and was not ashamed to be young. He splashed about and made merry in his youth as in a warm lake. He had all the desires, the graces, and the defects of his age. He was fitful with his father. One day he hurt him, the next, put him into the seventh heaven; he was capable of not saying a word for weeks together and then suddenly throwing himself on his father's neck in the highest spirits. Good times with his friends were more to his taste than work. He refused no invitations to drink, stared at women and dressed better than other people. But he was warmhearted; he gave money to the needy, was charitable without boasting of it, never sent away any one disconsolate. He was seldom seen at the synagogue, and for this and for other reasons the middle-class people of the neighborhood, timid, colorless people, religious and self-seeking, did not think well of him and advised their sons to have nothing to do with him. So much the more because the young man wanted to spend more than his father's resources allowed him—a good man, they said, but weak and blinded—and because he talked recklessly and said things which were not fitting for the son of a good family brought up as he ought to be. The little life of that little country hole was repugnant to him; he said it was better to look for adventure in rich countries, populous, far away, beyond the mountains and the sea, where the big, luxurious cities are, with marble buildings and the best wines and shops full of silk and silver, and women dressed in fine clothes like queens fresh from aromatic baths who lightly give themselves for a piece of gold.

There in the country you had to obey orders and work hard, and there was no outlet for gypsy-like and nomadic tastes. His father, although he was rich, although he was good, measured out the drachma as if they were talents. His brother was vexed if he bought a new tunic or came home a little tipsy; in the family all they knew was the field, the furrow, the pasture, the stock; a life that was not a life but one long effort.

And one day (he had thought of it many times before, but had never had the courage to say it) he hardened his heart and his face and said to his father, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me, and I will ask nothing more of thee."

When the old man heard this, he was deeply hurt, but he made no answer, and went away into his room that his tears should not be seen, and for a while neither of them spoke any more of this matter. But the son suffered, was sullen, and lost all his ardor and animation even to the fresh color of his face. And the father, seeing his son suffer, suffered himself, and yet suffered more at the thought of losing him. But finally paternal love conquered self-love. The estimations and valuations of the property were made, and the father gave to both his sons their rightful part and kept the rest for himself. The young man lost no time, he sold what he could not carry away, gathered together a goodly sum, and one evening, without saying anything to any one, mounted his fine horse and went away. The older brother was rather pleased by his departure; the younger would never have the courage to come back; so now he was the only son, first in command, and no one would take away the rest of his inheritance from him.

But the father secretly wept many tears, all the tears of his old wrinkled eyelids. Every line of his old face was washed with tears, his aged cheeks were soaked with his grieving. His son was gone and he needed all the love of the remaining son to make up for the sorrow of the separation.

But he had an intuition that perhaps he had not lost his son forever, his second-born, that before his death he would have the happiness to kiss him again; and this idea helped him to endure the loneliness.

In the meantime the young man drew rapidly near to the rich city of revels where he meant to live. At every turning of the road he felt of the money-bags which hung at either side of his saddle. He soon arrived at the city of his desire and began his feasting. It seemed to him that those thousands of coins would last forever. He rented a fine house, bought five or six slaves, dressed like a prince, and soon had men and women friends who were guests at his table, and who drank his wine till their stomachs could hold no more. He did not economize with women and chose the most beautiful the city contained, those who knew how to dance and sing and dress with magnificence, and undress with grace. No presents seemed too fine or too rich to please those bodies which abandoned themselves with such voluptuous softness, and which gave him the wildest, most torturing pleasure. The little provincial lord from the dull country, repressed in the most sensual period of his life, now vented his voluptuousness, his love of luxury, in this dangerous life.

Such a life could not go on forever: the money bags of the prodigal son were not bottomless—no money bags are—and there came a day when there was neither gold nor silver, and not even copper, but only empty bags of canvas and leather lying limp and flabby on the brick floor of his room. His friends disappeared, the women disappeared, slaves, beds and dining-tables were sold. With the proceeds he had enough to buy food, but only for a short time. To complete his misfortune, a famine came on the country and the prodigal son found himself hungering in the midst of a famine-stricken people. The women had gone off to other cities where the situation was better; the friends of his drunken night-revels had hard work to look out for themselves.

The unfortunate man, stripped and destitute, left the city, traveling with a lord who was going to the country where he had a fine estate. He begged him for work, till the lord hired him as swine-herd because he was young and strong and hardly any one was willing to be a swine-herd. For a Jew nothing could be a greater affliction than this. Even in Egypt, although animals were adored there, the only people forbidden to enter the temples were swine-herds. No father would have given his daughter to wife to a swine-herd and no man for all the gold in the world would have married the daughter of a swine-herd.

But the prodigal son had no choice and was forced to lead the herd of swine out to the pasture. He was given no pay and very little to eat, because there was only a little for any one; but there was no famine for the hogs, because they could eat anything. There were plenty of carob beans and they gorged themselves on those. Their hungry attendant enviously watched the pink and black animals rooting in the earth, chewing beans and roots, and longed to fill his stomach with the same stuff and wept, remembering the abundance of his own home and his festivals in the great city. Sometimes overcome with hunger he took one of the black bean-husks, from under the grunting snouts of the pigs, tempering the bitterness of his suffering with that insipid and woody food. And woe to him if his employer had seen him!

His dress was a dirty slave's smock which smelt of manure, his foot-gear a pair of worn-out sandals scarcely held together with rushes; on his head a faded hood. His fair young face, tanned by the sun of the hills, was thin and long, and had taken a sickly color between gray and brown.

Who was wearing now the spotless home-spun clothes, which he had left in his brother's chests? Where now were the fair silken tunics dyed purple which he had sold for so little? His father's hired servants were better dressed than he, and they fared better than he.

Returned to his senses, he said to himself, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" Until now he had brushed away the idea of going home as soon as it had appeared. How could he bear to go back in this condition and give in to his brother after having despised his home, after having made his father weep? To return without a garment, unshod, without a penny, without the ring—the sign of liberty—uncomely, disfigured by this famished slavery, stinking and contaminated by this abominable trade, to show that the wise old neighbors were right, that his serious-minded brother was right, to bow himself at the knee of the old man whom he had left without a greeting, to return with opprobrium as a ragged fellow to the spot from which he had departed as a king! To come back to the soup-plate into which he had spit—into a house which contained nothing of his!

No, there was something of his always in his home, his father! If he belonged to his father, his father belonged also to him. He was his creation, made of his flesh, issued from his seed in a moment of love. Though hurt, his father would never drive away his own flesh and blood. If he would not take him back as son, at least he would take him back as a hired servant, as he would any stranger, like a man born of another father. "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." I do not come back as son but as servant, a worker, and I do not ask love from you, for I have no more right to that, but only a little bread from your kitchen.

And the young man gave back the hogs to his master, and went towards his own land. He begged a piece of bread from the country people, and wept salt tears as he ate this bread of pity and charity in the shadow of the sycamores. His sore and blistered feet could scarcely carry him. He was barefoot now, but his faith in forgiveness led him homeward step by step.

And finally one day at noon he arrived in sight of his father's house; but he did not dare to knock, nor to call any one, nor to go in. He hung around outside to see if any one would come out. And behold, his father appeared on the threshold. His son was no longer the same, was changed, but the eyes of a father even dimmed by weeping could not fail to recognize him. He ran towards him and caught him to his breast, and kissed him and kissed him again, and could not stop from pressing his pale, old lips on that ravaged face, on those eyes whose expression was altered but still beautiful, on that hair, dusty but still waving and soft, on that flesh that was his own.

The son, covered with confusion and deeply moved, did not know how to respond to these kisses, and as soon as he could free himself from his father's arms he threw himself on the ground and repeated tremulously the speech he had prepared. "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son."

But if the young man had brought himself to the point of refusing the name of son, the old man never felt himself more father than at this moment; he seemed to become a father for a second time, and without even answering, with his eyes still clouded and soft, but with the ringing voice of his best days, he called to the servants:

"Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet."

The son of the master should not return home wretchedly dressed like a beggar. The finest garment should be given him, new shoes, a ring on his finger, and the servants must wait on him because he, too, is a master.

"And bring hither the fatted calf; and kill it, and let us eat and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

The fatted calf was kept in reserve for great feast days: but what festival can be greater for me than this one? I had wept for my son as dead and here he is alive with me. I had lost him in the world and the world has delivered him back to me. He was far away and now is with me, he was a beggar at the doors of strange houses, and now is master in his own house; he was famished and now he shall be served with a banquet at his own table.

And the servants obeyed him and the calf was killed, skinned, cut up and put to cook. The oldest wine was taken from the wine-cellar, and the finest room was prepared for the dinner in celebration of the return. Servants went to call his father's friends and others went to summon musicians, that there should be music. And when everything was ready, when the son had been bathed, and his father had kissed him many times more—almost as if to assure himself with his lips that his true son was there with him and it was not the vision of a dream—they commenced the banquet, the wines were mixed and the musicians accompanied the songs of joy.

The older son was in the field, working, and in the evening when he came back and was near to the house he heard shouts and stampings and clapping of hands, and the footsteps of dancers. And he could not understand. "Whatever can have happened? Perhaps my father has gone crazy or perhaps a wedding procession has arrived unexpectedly at our house."

Disliking noise and new faces, he would not enter and see for himself what it was. But he called to a boy coming out of the house and asked him what all that clatter was.

"Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound."

These words were like a thrust at his heart. He turned pale, not with pleasure, but with rage and jealousy. The old envy boiled up inside. It seemed to him that he had all the right on his side, and he would not go into the house, but stayed outside, angry.

Then his father went out and entreated him: "Come, for your brother has come back and has asked after you, and will be glad to see you, and we will feast together."

But the serious-minded young man could not contain himself, and for the first time in his life ventured to reprove his father to his face.

"Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf."

With these few words he discloses all the ignominy of his soul hidden until then under the Pharisaical cloak of good behavior. He reproaches his father with his own obedience, he reproaches him with his avarice. "You have never given me even a kid"—and he reproaches him, he, a loveless son, for being a too-loving father. "This thy son." He does not say "brother." His father may recognize him as son, but he will not recognize him as brother. "He hath devoured thy living with harlots. Money that was not his, with women that were not his; while I stayed with thee sweating on thy fields with no recompense."

But his father pardoned this son, as he did the other son. "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."

The father is sure that these words will be enough to silence the other. "He was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found. What other reasons can be needed, and what other reasons can be better than these—grant that he has done what he has done, that he has spent my money on women; he has dissipated as much as he could; he left me without a greeting; he left me to weep. He could have done worse than that and still would have been my son. He could have stolen on the streets, could have murdered the guiltless, he could have offended me even more, but I never could forget that he is my son, my own blood. He was gone and has returned, was disappeared and has reappeared, was lost and is found, was dead and is alive again. This is enough for me and to celebrate this miracle a fatted calf seems little to me. Thou hast never left me, I always enjoyed thee, all my kids are thine if thou asketh for them; thou hast eaten every day at my table; but he was gone for so many days and weeks and months! I saw him only in my dreams; he has not eaten a single piece of bread with me in all that time. Have I not the right to triumph at least this day?"

Jesus stopped here, He did not go on with His story. There was no need of that, the meaning of the parable is clear with no additions. But no story—after that of Joseph—that ever came from human lips is more beautiful than this one or ever touched more deeply the hearts of men. Interpreters are free to comment and explain, that the prodigal son is the new man purified by the experience of grief, and the older son, the Pharisee who observes the old law but does not know love. Or else that the older son is the Jewish people who do not understand the love of the Father welcoming the pagan, although he had wallowed in the foul loves of paganism and had lived in the company of swine.

Jesus was no maker of riddles. He Himself says expressly that the meaning of this and similar parables is: "More joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner who repents than over all the righteous" who vaunt themselves in their false righteousness; than for all the pure who are proud of their external purity; than for all the zealots who hide the aridity of their hearts by their apparent respect for the law.

The truly righteous will be received in the Kingdom, but no one ever doubted them, they have made no one tremble and suffer and there is no need to rejoice; but for him who has been near perdition, who has gone through deep sufferings to make himself a new soul, to overcome his bestiality, who merits his place in the Kingdom the more because he has had to deny all his past to obtain it, for him songs of triumph shall arise.

"What man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost."

Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, "Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost."

And what is a sheep compared to a son returned to life, to a man saved? And of what value is a piece of silver compared to one astray, who finds holiness again?

THE PARABLES OF SIN

But forgiveness creates an obligation for which there are no exceptions allowed. Love is a fire which goes out if it does not kindle others. Thou hast burned with joy; kindle him who comes near you if thou wilt not become like stone, smoky but cold. He who has received must give; it is better to give much, but it is essential to give a part at least.

A king one day wanted a reckoning with his servants and one by one he called them before him. Among the first was one who owed him ten thousand talents, but as he had not anything to pay this, the king commanded that he should be sold and his wife and his children and all that he had, in payment of a part of the debt. The servant in despair threw himself at the feet of the king. He seemed a mere bundle of garments crying out sobs and promises. "Have patience with me, wait a little longer and I will pay you all, but do not have my wife and my children separated from me, sent away like cattle, no one knows where."

The king was moved with compassion—he also had little children—and he sent him away free and forgave him that great debt. The servant went out and seemed another man; but his heart, even after so much mercy shown to him, was the same as before. And he met one of his fellow-servants who owed him a hundred pence, a small thing compared with ten thousand talents, and he sprang on him and took him by the throat. "Pay me what thou owest and at once, or I will have thee bound by the guards." The unlucky man assaulted in this way did what his persecutor had done a little while before in the presence of the king. He fell down at his feet and besought him and wept and swore that he would pay him in a few days and kissed the hem of his garment, and recalled to him their old comradeship and begged him to wait in the name of the children who were waiting for him in his home.

But the oaf, who was a servant and not a king, had no compassion. He took his debtor by the arm and had him cast into prison. The news spread abroad among the other servants of the palace. They were full of compassion, and it came quickly to the ears of the king, who called that pitiless man and delivered him to the tormentors: "I forgave you that great debt, shouldst thou not have had compassion on thy brother, for his debt was so much smaller? I had pity on thee, oughtest thou not to have had pity on him?"

Sinners when they recognize the evil which is in their hearts and abjure it with true humility are nearer to the Kingdom than pious men who daub themselves with the praise of their own piety.

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, the other a Publican. The Pharisee, with his phylacteries hanging upon his forehead and on his left arm, with the long, glittering fringes on his cloak, erect like a man who feels himself in his own house, prayed thus: "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess."

But the Publican did not have the courage even to lift his eyes and seemed ashamed to appear before his Lord. He sighed and smote on his breast and said only these words: "God be merciful to me a sinner."

"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

A lawyer asked Jesus who is one's neighbor, and Jesus told this story: "A man, a Jew, went down from Jerusalem to Jericho through the mountain passes. Thieves fell upon him, and after they had wounded him and taken away his clothes, they left him upon the road half dead. A priest passed that way, one of those who go to all the feasts and meetings, and boast that they know the will of God from beginning to end. He saw the unfortunate man stretched out but he did not stop, and to avoid touching something unclean he passed by on the other side of the road. A little after came a Levite. He also was among the most accredited of the zealots, knew every detail of all the holy ceremonies, and seemed more than a sacristan, seemed one of the masters of the Temple. He looked at the bloody body and went on his way. And finally came a Samaritan. To the Jews the Samaritans were faithless, traitors, only slightly less detestable than the Gentiles, because they would not sacrifice at Jerusalem and accept the reform of Nehemiah. The Samaritan, however, did not wait to see if the unfortunate man thrown among the stones of the street were circumcized or uncircumcized, were a Jew or a Samaritan. He came up close to him, and seeing him in such an evil pass, he was quickly moved to pity, took down his flasks from his saddle and poured upon his wounds a little oil, a little wine, bound them up as well as he could with a handkerchief, put the stranger across his ass and brought him to an inn, had him put to bed, tried to restore him, giving him something hot to drink, and did not leave him until he saw him come to himself and able to speak and eat. The next day he called the host apart and gave him two pence: 'Take care of him, do the best thou canst and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.'

"The neighbor, then, is he who suffers, he who needs help, whoever he is, of whatever nation or religion he may be; even thine enemy, if he needs thee, even if he does not ask help, is the first of 'thy neighbors.'"

Charity is the most valid title for admission to the Kingdom. The wealthy glutton knew this, he who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. At the gate of his palace there was Lazarus, a poor man, hungry, covered with sores, who would have been glad to have the crumbs and the bones which fell from the rich man's table. The dogs took pity on Lazarus and on his wretchedness, and did for him all they could, which was to lick his sores. And he caressed these gentle, loving animals with his thin hands. But the rich man had no pity on Lazarus. It never once came into his head to call him to his table, and he never sent him a piece of bread or the leavings of the kitchen destined for the refuse heap, which even the scullions refused to eat. It happened that both of them, the poor man and the rich man, died, and the poor man was welcomed into Abraham's bosom, and the rich man was cast into the fire to suffer. From afar off he saw Lazarus, who was banqueting with the patriarchs, and from the midst of the fire he cried: "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

He had not given Lazarus even a tiny morsel of food when he was alive, and now he did not ask to be let out of the fire, nor a cup of water, nor even a draught, nor even a drop, but he was content with a little dampness which would cling on the tip of a finger, of the smallest finger of the poor man. But Abraham answered: "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." If thou hadst given the smallest part of thy dinner to him, when thou knewest he was hungered and was crouched at thy door in worse plight than a dog, and even the dogs had more pity than thou, if thou hadst given him a mouthful of bread only once, thou wouldst not need now to ask the tip of his finger dipped in water.

The rich man delights in his property and it grieves him to have to give away even the smallest part of it because he thinks that this life will never end and that the future will be like the past. But death comes to him also, and when he expects it least. There was once a landed proprietor who had an especially profitable year in all his possessions. He had fantastic imaginings about his new riches, and he said: "I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods, the wheat, the barley and the other grains, and I will make other barns for the hay and the straw and other stables for the oxen that I will buy, and still another stable where I can put all my sheep and goats, and I will say to my soul: Thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

And the idea did not come to him even for a moment that from this largesse of the earth he could have put aside a portion to comfort the poor of his country. But on that very night when he had imagined so many improvements in his property, the rich man died, and the day after, he was buried naked and alone, under the earth, and there was no one to intercede for him in Heaven.

He who does not make friends among the poor, who does not use wealth to comfort poverty, must not think of entering into the Kingdom. Sometimes the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light, understand the management of their earthly affairs better than the children of light understand their heavenly life. Like that steward who was out of favor with his master and was obliged to leave his position. He called one by one his lord's debtors to him, and canceled a part of the debt of every one, so that when he was sent away he had made here and there with his fraudulent stratagem so many friends that they did not let him die of hunger. He had benefited himself and the others by cheating and robbing his master. He was a thief, but a shrewd thief. If men would use for the salvation of the spirit the shrewdness which this man used for his bodily comfort, how many more would be converted to faith in the Kingdom!

He who is not converted in time will be cut down like the unfruitful fig-tree. And the conversion must be final, for falling from grace injures a man's soul a great deal more than repentance helps him. A man had an unclean spirit in him and succeeded in driving it away. The demon walked through dry places seeking rest; and finding none, he said: "I will return into my house whence I came out." It happens that this house, the soul of that man, is empty, swept and garnished so that it is hard to recognize it. Then the demon takes to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself and at the head of the band he enters into his house so that the last state of that man was worse than the first.

In the day of triumph laments and excuses will count less than the whispering of the wind among the rushes. Then will be made the last and irrevocable choice, like that of the fisherman who, after having pulled up from the sea his net full of fish, sits down on the beach and puts those fit for food into his baskets and throws away the others. A long truce is given to sinners, that they may have all the time necessary to change their hearts, but when that day has come he who has not arrived at the door, or is not worthy, will remain eternally outside.

A good husbandman sowed good seed in his field, but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat. When the blade was sprung up, the servants of the household saw the tares and came and told their master of it.

"Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?" But he said, "Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn."

Thus like a good husbandman Jesus waits for the day of the harvest. One day an immense multitude was about Him to listen to Him, and seeing all these men and these women who were hungering after righteousness and thirsting after love, He was moved with compassion and said to His disciples: "The harvest truly is plenteous but the laborers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into this harvest."

His voice does not carry everywhere, not even the Twelve are enough: others are necessary to proclaim the good news, that it may be carried to all those who suffer and who await it.

THE TWELVE

Fate knows no better way to punish the great for their greatness than by sending them disciples. Every disciple, just because he is a disciple, cannot understand all that his master says, but at very best only half, and that according to the kind of mind he has. Thus without wishing to falsify the teaching of his master, he deforms it, vulgarizes it, belittles it, corrupts it.

The disciple nearly always has companions and is jealous of them; he would like to be at least first among those who are second; and accordingly he maligns and plots against his fellows; and each one believes that he is, or at least wishes others to believe that he is, the only perfect interpreter of the master.

The disciple knows that he is a disciple and sometimes it shames him to be one who eats at another's table. Then he twists and turns the master's thought to make it seem that he has a thought of his own, different and original. Or else, and this is the most graceless and servile manner of being a disciple, he teaches exactly the opposite of what he was taught.

In every disciple, even in those who seem most loyal, there is the seed of a Judas. A disciple is a parasite, a middleman who robs the seller and tricks the buyer; a dependent who, invited to dine, nibbles at the hors d'œuvres, licks the sauces, picks at the fruit, but does not attack the bones because he has no teeth, or only milk teeth, to crack them and suck out the meaty marrow. The disciple paraphrases sentences, obscures mysteries, complicates what is clear, multiplies difficulties, comments on syllables, travesties principles, clouds evidence, magnifies non-essentials, weakens the essential, dilutes the strong wine, and retails this hodge-podge as elixir distilled and quintessent. Instead of a torch which gives light and fire, he is a smoky wick giving no light even to himself.

And yet no one has been able to dispense with these pupils and followers, nor even to wish to. For the great man is so foreign to the multitude, so distant, so alone, that he needs to feel some one near him. He cannot teach without the illusion that some one understands his words, receives his ideas, transmits them to others far away before his death and after his death. This wanderer who has no home of his own needs a friendly hearth. To this uprooted man who cannot have a family of his own flesh and blood, the children of his spirit are dear. The prophet is a captain whose soldiers spring up only after his blood has soaked into the ground, and yet he longs to feel a little army about him during his life-time. Here is one of the most tragic elements in all greatness: disciples are repugnant and dangerous, but disciples, even false ones, cannot be dispensed with. Prophets suffer if they do not find them; they suffer, perhaps more, when they have found them.

A man's thought is bound with a thousand threads to his soul even more closely than a child to a parent's heart. It is infinitely precious, delicate, fragile, and the newer it is, the harder it is for other men to understand. It is a tremendous responsibility, a continued torture and suffering to confide it to another, to graft it on another's thought, to give it into the hands of the man incapable of respecting it, this gift so rare, a thought new in human life. And yet every great man longs to share with all men what he has received; and to achieve this sharing with humanity is more than he can do single-handed. Then, too, vanity insinuates itself even in noble breasts: and vanity needs caressing words, needs praise, even offensive praise, needs assent, even verbal, consecration even from the mediocre, victories even if they are only apparent.

Christ has none of this smallness of the great, and yet in order to share all the burdens of mankind, He accepted with the other trials of earthly life the burden of disciples. Before being tormented by His enemies, He gave himself over to be tormented by His friends. The priests killed him, once and once only; the disciples made Him suffer every day of their life with Him. The anguish of His passion would not have been completely intolerable if it had not included the desertion of the Apostles in addition to the Sadducees, the guards, the Romans, the crowd.

We know who the Apostles were. A Galilean, He chose them from among the Galileans. A poor man, He chose them from among the poor; a simple man, but of a divine simplicity transcending all philosophies, He called simple men whose simplicity kept them like clods. He did not wish to choose them from among the rich, because He had come to combat the rich; nor among the scribes and doctors, because He had come to overturn their law; nor among the philosophers, because there were no philosophers living in Palestine, and had there been, they would have tried to extinguish His supernatural mysticism under the dialectic bushel.

He knew that these souls were rough but had integrity, were ignorant but ardent, and that He could in the end mold them according to His desire, bring them up to His level, fashion them like clay from the river, which is only mud, and yet when modeled and baked in the kiln, becomes eternal beauty. But flame from the Holy Ghost was needed for that transformation; until the day of the Pentecost their imperfect nature had too often the upper hand. To the Twelve much should be pardoned because almost always they had faith in Him; because they tried to love Him as He wished to be loved; and, above all, because after having deserted Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, they never forgot Him and left to all eternity the memory of His word and of His life.

And yet our hearts ache if we look at them closely in the Gospels, those disciples of whom we have some knowledge. They were not always worthy of their unique and supreme felicity, those men who were so inestimably fortunate as to live with Christ, to walk, to eat with Him, to sleep in the same room, to look into His face, to touch His hand, to kiss Him, to hear His words from His very mouth; those twelve fortunate men, whom throughout the centuries millions of souls have secretly envied.

We see them, hard of head and of heart, not able to understand the clearest parables of the Master; not always capable of understanding, even after His death, who Jesus had been and what sort of a new Kingdom was proclaimed by Him; often lacking in faith, in love, in brotherly affection; eager for pay; envying each other; impatient for the revenge which would repay them for their long wait; intolerant of those who were not one with them; vindictive towards those who would not receive them, somnolent, doubtful, materialistic, avaricious, cowardly.

One of them denies Him three times; one of them delays giving Him due reverence until He is in the sepulcher; one does not believe in His mission because He comes from Nazareth; one is not willing to admit His resurrection; one sells Him to His enemies, and gives Him over with His last kiss to those who come to arrest Him. Others, when Christ's teachings were on a too-lofty level, "went back and walked no more with Him."

Many times Jesus was forced to reprove them for their slowness of mind. He told them the parable of the sower, and they did not understand its meaning. "Know ye not this parable, and how then will ye know all parables?" He warns them against the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and they think that He is speaking of material bread. "Why reason ye because ye have no bread, perceive ye not yet, neither understand? Have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes see ye not, and having ears hear ye not?" Like the common people they constantly feel that Jesus should be the worldly Messiah, political, warlike, come to restore the temporal throne of David. Even when He is about to ascend into Heaven they continue to ask Him: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?" And after the resurrection, the two disciples of Emmaus say: "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel."

They disputed among themselves to know who should have the chief place in the new Kingdom and Jesus reproved them: "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" But they held their peace, for by the way they had disputed among themselves who should be the greatest. And He sat down and called the Twelve and saith unto them: "If any man desires to be first, the same shall be last of all and the servant of all." Jealous of their privileges they denounced to Jesus one who was casting out devils in His name: "Forbid him not," answered Jesus, "for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part." After a talk at Capernaum many murmured at his words and said: "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" and they left Him.

And yet Jesus spared no warnings to those who wished to follow Him. A Scribe said to Him that he would follow Him everywhere. "And Jesus saith unto him: The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." Another who was a disciple wished first to bury his father, "But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead." And still another, "Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God."

A rich young man came to Him who observed all the Commandments. "Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions."

To be with Him, a man must needs leave his home, his dead, his family, his money,—all the ordinary loves, all the ordinary good things of life. What is given in exchange is so great that it will repay every renunciation. But few are capable of this renunciation, and some after they have believed, falter.

Renunciation was easier for the Twelve, almost all poor men, yet even they did not always succeed in being as Jesus wished them.

"Simon, Simon," He said one day to Peter, "behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." In spite of the winnowing of Christ, some evil seeds remained among his grain.

SIMON, CALLED THE ROCK

Peter before the Resurrection is like a body beside a spirit, like a material voice which accompanies the sublimation of the soul. He is the earth which believes in Heaven but remains earthy. In his rough man's imagination the Kingdom of Heaven still resembles rather too closely the Kingdom of the Prophets' Messiah.

When Jesus pronounced the famous words: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," Peter thought this sweeping condemnation of wealth very harsh. "Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" He acts like a money lender inquiring what interest he can expect. And Jesus, to console him, promises him that he will sit upon a throne to judge one of the tribes of Israel, that the other eleven will judge the other eleven tribes, and adds that every one shall have a hundred times what he has given up.

Again Peter does not understand what Christ means when He asserts that only what comes from man himself can defile men. "Peter then answered and said unto him: Declare unto us this parable, and Jesus said: Are ye also without understanding? Do ye not yet understand?" Among the disciples so slow to understand, Peter is one of the slowest. His surname "Cefa," stone, piece of rock, was not given him only for the firmness of his faith, but for the hardness of his head.

He was not an alert spirit in either the literal or the figurative meaning of the word. He easily fell asleep even at supreme moments. He fell asleep on the Mount of the Transfiguration. He fell asleep on the night at Gethsemane, after the last supper, where Jesus had uttered the saying which would have kept even a Scribe everlastingly from sleep. And yet his boldness was great. When Jesus that last evening announced that He was to suffer and die, Peter burst out: "Lord, I am ready to go with thee both, into prison, and to death. Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. If I should die with thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise." Jesus answered him;

"Verily I say unto thee that this night before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice."

Jesus knew him better than Peter knew himself. When he stood in the courtyard of Caiaphas, warming himself at the brazier while the priests were questioning and insulting his God, he denied three times that he was one of His followers.

At the moment of the arrest he had made, against the teaching of Jesus, an appearance of resistance: he had cut off the ear of Malchus. He had not yet understood after years of daily comradeship with Christ that any form of material violence was repellent to Jesus. He had not understood that if Jesus had wished to save Himself, He could have hidden in the wilderness unknown to all, or escaped out of the hands of the soldiers as He had done that first time at Nazareth. So little did Jesus value this act, contrary to His teaching, that he healed the wound at once and reproved His untimely avenger.

That was not the first time that Peter showed himself unequal to great events. He had like all crude personalities a tendency to see the material dross in spiritual manifestations, the low in the lofty, the commonplace in the tragic. On the mountain of the transfiguration, when he was awakened and saw Jesus refulgent with white light, speaking with two others, with two spirits, with two prophets, the first thought which came to him, instead of worshiping and keeping silence, was to build a tabernacle for these great personages. "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." Luke, the wise man, adds to excuse him, "not knowing what he said."

When he saw Jesus walking in all security on the lake, the idea came to him to do the same thing. "And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me" And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Because he was familiar with the lake and with

Jesus, the good fisherman thought he could do as his master did, and did not know that the storm could be mastered only by a soul infinitely greater, a faith infinitely more potent than his.

His great love for Christ, which makes up for all his weakness, led him one day almost to rebuke Him. Jesus had told His disciples how He must suffer and be killed. "Then Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." No one ever pronounced such a terrible judgment on Simon, called Peter. He was called to work for the Kingdom of God, and he *thought as men do*. His mind, still occupied with the vulgar idea of the triumphant Messiah, refused to conceive of a persecuted Messiah condemned and executed. His soul had not yet kindled to the idea of divine expiation, the idea that salvation cannot be secured without an offering of suffering and blood, and that the great should sacrifice His body to the ferocity of mean men in order that the mean, after being enlightened by that life, may be saved from that death. He loved Jesus, but although his love was warm and potent, it still had something earthy in it, and he grew angry at the thought that his king should be reviled, that his God should die. And yet he was the first to recognize Jesus as the Christ; and this primacy is so great that nothing has been able to cancel it.

SONS OF THUNDER

The two fishermen, the brothers James and John, who had left their boat and their nets on the shore at Capernaum in order to go with Jesus, form together with Peter a sort of favorite triumvirate. They are the only ones who accompany Jesus into the house of Jairus, and on the Mount of Transfiguration, and they are the ones whom He takes with Him on the night of Gethsemane. But in spite of their long intimacy with the Master, they never acquired sufficient humility. Jesus gave them the surname of "Boanerges—Sons of Thunder," an ironic surname, alluding perhaps to their fiery, irascible character.

When they all started together towards Jerusalem, Jesus sent some of them ahead to make ready for Him. They were crossing Samaria and were badly received in a village. "And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples, James and John, saw this, they said: Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them? But he turned, and rebuked them." For them, Galileans, faithful to Jerusalem, the Samaritans were always enemies. In vain had they heard the Sermon on the Mount: "Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." In vain had they received instructions for their mission among the peoples: "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet." Angry at an affront to Jesus they presumed to be able to command fire from Heaven. It seemed to them a work of righteous justice to reduce to ashes the village guilty of inhospitality. And yet far as they were from that loving rebirth of the soul which alone constitutes the reality of the Kingdom of Heaven, these men had the pretension to claim the first places on the day of triumph.

"And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came unto him, saying: Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we should desire. And he said unto them: What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him: Grant unto us that we may sit one on thy right hand and one on thy left hand in thy glory. But Jesus said unto them: Ye know not what ye ask. And when the ten heard it they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to Him and saith unto them: Whosoever will be great among you let him be your minister; and whosoever will be the chief among you, let him be your servant, for even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister."

Christ, the overturner of the old order, took this occasion to repeat the master word to which all magnanimous souls respond. Only the useless, the petty, the parasites, wish to be served, even by their inferiors (if any one in the absolute meaning of the word can be inferior to them), but any superior being is always at the service of lesser souls precisely because he is superior.

This miraculous paradox is the proof of the fire of genius. It is repugnant to the egotism of the self-centered, to the pretensions of would-be supermen, and to the poverty of the avaricious because the little that they have is not even enough for themselves. He who cannot or will not serve shows that he has nothing to give, is a weakling, impotent, imperfect, empty. But the genius is no true genius if he does not exuberantly benefit his inferiors. To serve is not always the same as to obey. A people can be served better sometimes by a man who puts himself at their head to force them to be saved even if they do not wish it. There is nothing servile in serving.

James and John understood this stimulating saying of Jesus. We find one of them, John, among the nearest and most loving of the disciples. At the Last Supper he leans his head on Jesus' breast; and from the height of the cross Jesus, crucified, confides the Virgin to him, that he should be a son to her.

THE OTHERS

Thomas owes his popularity to the quality which should be his shame. Thomas, the twin, is the guardian of modernity, as Thomas Aquinas is the oracle of medieval life. He is the true patron saint of Spinoza and of all the other deniers of the resurrection, the man who is not satisfied even with the testimony of his eyes, but wishes that of his hands as well. And yet his love for Jesus makes him pardonable. When they came to the Master to say that Lazarus was dead, and the disciples hesitated before going into Judea among their enemies, it was Thomas alone who said: "Let us also go, that we may die with him." The martyrdom which he did not find then came to him in India, after Christ's death.

Matthew is the dearest of all the Twelve. He was a taxgatherer, a sort of under-publican, and probably had more education than his companions. He followed Jesus as readily as the fishermen. "And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him. And Levi made him a great feast in his own house." It was not a heap of torn nets which Matthew left, but a position, a stipend, secure and increasing earnings. Giving up riches is easy for a man who has almost nothing. Among the Twelve Matthew was certainly the richest before his conversion. Of no other is it told that he could offer a great feast, and this means that he made a greater and more meritorious sacrifice by his rising at the first call from the seat where he was accumulating money.

Matthew and Judas were perhaps the only ones of the Disciples who knew how to write, and to Matthew we owe the first collection of Logia or memorable sayings of Jesus, if the testimony of Papia is true. In the Gospel which is called by his name, we find the most complete text of the Sermon on the Mount. Our debt to the poor excise-man is heavy: without him many words of Jesus, and the most beautiful, might have been lost. This handler of drachma, shekels and talents, whom his despised trade must have predisposed to avarice, has laid up for us a treasure worth more than all the money coined on the earth before and after his time.

Philip of Bethsaida also knew how to reckon. When the famished multitude pressed about Him, Jesus turned to him to ask what it would cost to buy bread for all those people. Philip answered Him: "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them." He was later to become a proclaimer of his Master's fame. He it was who announced to Nathaniel the coming of Jesus, and it was to him that the Greeks of Jerusalem turned when they wished to speak to the new Prophet.

Nathaniel answered Philip's announcement with sarcasm: "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" But Philip succeeded in bringing him to Jesus, who as soon as He saw him, exclaimed, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathaniel saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me?

Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathaniel answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these."

Less enthusiastic and inflammable was Nicodemus, who, as a matter of fact, never wished to be known as a disciple of Jesus. Nicodemus was old, had been to school to the Rabbis, was a friend of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin, but the stories of the miracles had shaken him, and he went by night to Jesus to tell Him that he believed that He was sent by God. Jesus answered him, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus did not understand these words, or perhaps they startled him. He had come to see a miracle worker and had found a Sybil, and with the homely good sense of the man who wishes to avoid being taken in by a fraud he said, "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answers with words of profound meaning, "Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

But Nicodemus still did not understand. "How can these things be?" Jesus answered, "Art thou a master of Israel and knowest not these things?"

Nicodemus always respected the young Galilean, but his sympathy was as circumspect as his visit. Once when the leaders of the priests and the Pharisees were meditating how to capture Jesus, Nicodemus ventured a defense: "Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" He took his stand on a point of law. He spoke in the name of "our" law, not at all in the name of the new man. Nicodemus is always the old man, law-respecting, the prudent friend of the letter of the law. A few words of reproof were enough to silence him. "They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet!" He belonged by right to the Sanhedrin, but there is no record that he raised his voice in favor of the accused when He was conducted to Caiaphas. The trial was at night and probably to avoid the contempt of his colleagues and his own remorse for the legal assassination, Nicodemus remained in his bed. When he awoke Jesus was dead, and then, forgetting his avarice, he bought a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes to embalm the body. He who brought others to life was dead, but Nicodemus, although not literally dead, would never know that second birth in which he could not believe.

Nicodemus is the eternal type of the luke-warm who will be spewed out of the mouth of God on the day of wrath. He is the half-way soul who would like to say "Yes" with his spirit, but his flesh suggests to him the "No" of cowardice. He is the man of books, the nocturnal disciple who would like to be a follower of the Master, but not to appear as one; who would not mind being born again, but who does not know how to break the withered bark of his ageing trunk; the man of inhibitions and precautions. When the man of his admiration was martyred and killed and His enemies were satisfied, and there was no more danger of being compromised, then he comes with balsams to pour into those wounds which were inflicted partly by his cowardice.

But the church to reward his posthumous piety has chosen him to become one of her saints. And there is an old tradition that he was baptized by Peter and put to death for having believed, too late, in Him whom he did not save from death.

LAMBS, SERPENTS, AND DOVES

Those whom Jesus sent out to the conquest of souls were rustic countrymen, but they could be mild as sheep, wary as serpents, simple as doves—sheep without cowardice, serpents without poison, doves without lustfulness.

To be stripped of everything was the first duty of such soldiers. Seeking the poor, they should be poorer than the poor. And yet not beggars, for the laborer is worthy of his hire; the bread of life which they were to distribute to those hungering for justice deserved wheat bread in return. The laborers should set out on their wonderful work destitute of possessions, taking nothing for their journey save a staff only, no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse. They should be shod with sandals, clad in a single garment. The metals are a burden which weighs down the soul. The sheen of gold makes men forget the sun's splendor; the sheen of silver makes them forget the splendor of the stars; the sheen of copper makes them forget the splendor of fire. He who deals with metals weds himself to the earth and is bound fast to the earth. He does not know Heaven, and Heaven does not recognize him.

It is not enough to preach love of poverty to the poor, or to talk to them about the sumptuous beauty of poverty. The poor do not believe the words of the rich until the rich willingly become poor. The Disciples destined to preach the beauty of poverty to both poor and rich were to set an example of happy poverty to every man in every house on every day. They were to carry nothing with them except the clothes on their backs and the sandals on their feet. They were to accept nothing; only the small piece of daily bread which they would find on the tables of their hosts. The wandering priests of the goddess Siria and of other Oriental divinities carried with them, along with the sacred images, the wallet for offerings, the bag for alms, because common people do not value things which cost them nothing. The apostles of Jesus, on the contrary, were to refuse any gift or payment, "Freely ye have received, freely give." And as one of the disguises of wealth is merchandise, the messengers of the Kingdom were to renounce even a change of garments, sandals and staff; were to dispense with everything except the barest essentials.

They were to enter into the houses, open to all in a country where the locks and bolts of fear were not yet known, and which preserved some remembrance of nomad hospitality—they were to speak to the men and the women who lived there. Their duty was to announce that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, to explain in what way the kingdom of earth could become the Kingdom of Heaven, and to explain the one condition for this happy fulfilling of all the prophecies,—repentance, conversion, transformation of the soul. As a proof that they were sent by One who had the authority to demand this change, they had power to heal the sick, to drive away with their words unclean spirits,—that is, the demons, and the vices which make men like demons.

They commanded men to renew their souls and at once with all the power which had been given them they aided them to commence this renovation. They did not leave them alone with this command, so difficult to execute. After the prophetic word, "The Kingdom is at hand," they began their labors; they worked to restore, to cleanse, to make over these souls which had been abandoned by their rightful shepherds. They explained what it was necessary to do to be worthy of the new Heaven on earth and they lent a hand at once to the work. In short, to complete the paradox they assassinated and brought to life. They killed the old Adam in every convert, but their words were the baptism of the second birth. Pilgrims without purses or bundles, they carried with them truth and life,—peace.

"And when ye come into an house salute it," and this was the salutation, "Peace be with you." Those who received them gained peace, those who rejected them continued their bitter warfare. Coming away from the house or from the city which had not received them, they were to shake the dust from their feet, not because the dust of the houses and of the cities of those who were not willing to hear them was contaminated, but because shaking it from their feet is a symbolic answer to their deafness and niggardliness of soul. You have refused all, and we will not accept anything from you, not even the dust which clings to our sandals. Because you, made of dust and fated to return to dust as you are, will not give a moment of your time, nor a piece of your bread, we leave behind us the dust of your streets, down to the least grain.

SPEAK YE IN LIGHT

In their faithfulness to the sublime paradox of Him who sends them, the apostles bring peace and at the same time war! All men are not capable of conversion. In the same family, in the same house, there are some who will believe and others who will not. And there will spring up between them division and warfare, the hard price with which absolute and stable peace can be secured. If all men should listen at the same moment to the voice, if all could be transformed on the same day, the Kingdom of Heaven would be founded in a twinkling of an eye, with no bloody preface of battles.

Furthermore those who do not wish to change themselves, because they do not understand the news, or believe themselves already perfect, will attack the converters and accuse them before tribunals. Representatives of wealth and of the old law will be cruel to the poor who are teaching the new law to the poor. The rich are not willing to concede that their wealth is dangerous poverty; the scribes are not willing to admit that their learning is only deadly ignorance. . . . "They will scourge you in their synagogues. . . . But when they deliver you up, take no thought of how or what ye shall speak." Jesus is sure that the poor fishermen, though they have never studied in the schools of eloquence, will find for themselves great words in their hour of accusation. One thought, when it is a great thought and profoundly fixed in the heart, engenders of itself all the derivatory and accessory thoughts, and with them perfect form in which to express them. The arid-hearted man who has nothing in himself, who has faith in nothing, who does not feel, burn, and suffer, though he may have studied long with the sophists of Athens and the rhetoricians of Rome, is incapable of improvising one of those powerful and illuminating answers which trouble the conscience of the hardest judges.

They are to speak therefore without fear and without hiding anything of what has been taught them. "What I tell you in darkness that seek ye in light, and what ye hear in the ear, preach ye upon the housetops." With these words Jesus does not ask his Disciples to be more daring than he has been. He has spoken in the darkness, that is obscurity; He has spoken to them, to His first faithful followers, but what He has said to them along deserted roads and in solitary rooms they are to repeat as He Himself has given them the example, on open squares of cities before crowds of people. He has whispered the truth into their ears, because the truth at first might alarm those not prepared for it, and because there were so few of the Disciples that there was no need to cry aloud. But this truth must be cried out now from the heights, in order that all may hear it, in order that there may be no one to say on that Day that he has not heard it.

Men can kill the body of the man who spreads the truth abroad, but they cannot kill his soul; from the death of a single body thousands of new souls will be born into life. But not even your body will die, because there is One who protects it. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." The birds of the air who do not sow, do not die of hunger; you who do not carry even a staff shall not die at the hands of your enemies.

They have with them a secret so precious that the flesh which contains it will not be allowed to perish. Jesus is always with them, even though from afar. What is done to them is done to Him. A mystic identity is created for all eternity between Him who sends them out and those disciples who are sent. "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward."

Jesus is the fountain of living water destined to quench the thirst of all the weary, and yet He will take account also of the cup of water which shall have quenched the thirst of the least among His friends. Those who carry with them the water of truth, which purifies and saves, may need some day a cup of the stagnant water buried at the bottom of village wells. Any person who will give them a little of this ordinary, material water will have in exchange a well-spring which intoxicates the soul more than the strongest wine.

The apostles who go about with one garment, with a single pair of sandals, without belts or wallets, poor as poverty, bare as truth, simple as joy, are, in spite of their apparent poverty, diverse forms of a king who has come to found a kingdom greater and happier than all kingdoms, to bring to poor people wealth which is worth more than all measurable riches, to offer to the unhappy a joy more profound than any fleshly pleasures. It suits this new King, as it did the kings of the Orient, to show Himself under many forms, to appear to men in diverse garments. But the disguises which He prefers even to-day are these three: Poet, Poor Man, and Apostle.

MAMMON

Jesus is the poor man, infinitely and rigorously poor. Poor with an absolute poverty! The prince of poverty! The Lord of perfect destitution! The poor man who lives with the poor, who has come for the poor, who speaks to the poor, who gives to the poor, who works for the poor! Poor among the poor, destitute among the destitute, beggar among the beggars! The poor man of a great and eternal poverty! The happy and rich poor man, who accepts poverty, who desires poverty, who weds himself to poverty, who chants of poverty! The beggar who gives alms! The naked man who covers the naked! The hungry man who feeds others, the miraculous and supernatural, who changes the men owning false riches into poor men, and poor men into those with real wealth.

There are poor men who are poor because they were never capable of acquiring wealth. There are other poor men who are poor because they give away every evening what they earned that day; and the more they give the more they have. Their wealth, the wealth of this second class of poor men, grows greater in proportion as it is given away. It is a pile which becomes greater as more is taken away from it.

Jesus was one of these poor men. Compared to one of them, men materially rich, rich as the world esteems wealth, rich with their chests of talents, mina, rupees, florins, shekels, crowns, francs, marks, and dollars, are only lamentable beggars. The money-changers of the forum, the great feasters of Jerusalem, the bankers of Florence and Frankfort, the lords of London, the multi-millionaires of New York, compared to these poor men are only unfortunate beggars, despoiled and needy; unpaid servants of a fierce master; condemned every day to assassinate their own souls. The wretchedness of such indigence is so terrible that they are reduced to pick up the stones that are found in the mud of the earth, and grope about in filth. Theirs is a poverty so repugnant that not even the poor succeed in bestowing on them the charity of a smile.

Richness is a curse like work, but a harder and more shameful curse. He who is marked with the sign of wealth has committed, perhaps unconsciously, an infamous crime, one of those mysterious and unimaginable crimes which are nameless in human language. The rich man is either under the burden of the vengeance of God, or God wishes to put him to the test to see if he can succeed in climbing up to divine poverty. For the rich man has committed the greatest sin, the most abominable and unpardonable. The rich man is the man who has fallen because of an exchange: he could have had Heaven and he chose Earth. He could have lived in Paradise and he has chosen Hell. He could have kept his soul and he has exchanged it for material things. He could have loved and he has preferred to be hated. He could have had happiness and he has desired power. No one can save him. Wealth in his hands is a metal which buries him alive under its icy mass; it is the tumor which consumes him still alive in his corruption; it is the fire which burns him and reduces him to a terrible, black mummy, a blind paralytic, black mummy, a ghostly carrion which everlastingly holds out its empty hand in the cemeteries of the centuries, begging in vain for the alms of charitable remembrance.

For him there is only one salvation: to become a poor man, a true and humble poor man; to throw away the horrible destitution of wealth in order to enter again into poverty. But this resolution is the hardest that the rich man can take. The rich man by the very fact that he is sickened by wealth cannot even imagine that the entire renunciation of wealth would be the beginning of redemption, and because he cannot imagine such an abdication, he cannot even deliberate on it, cannot weigh the alternatives. He is a prisoner in the impregnable prison of himself. To liberate himself he must first be free.

The rich man does not belong to himself, but belongs to inanimate things. He has not the time to think, to choose. Wealth is a pitiless master who allows no other masters near him. The rich man cannot think of his soul, bowed as he is under the care of his riches, under his thirst to increase his riches, under the fear of losing his riches, under the material joys which are offered to him by those pieces of matter which are called wealth. He cannot even imagine that his sick, suffocating, mutilated, worm-eaten soul needs to be cured. He has taken up his abode in that part of the world which, according to contracts and laws, he has the right to call *his*, and often he has not even the time, the wish, or the power to enjoy it. He must serve it and take care of it,—he cannot serve or take care of his own soul. All his power of love is absorbed by these material things, which order him about, which have taken the place of his soul, which have robbed him of all his liberty. The horrible fate of the rich man lies in this double absurdity: in order to have the power to command men he has become the slave of dead things; in order to acquire a part (and such a very small part!) he has lost the whole.

Nothing is ours as long as it is ours alone. Outside of himself man can possess, actually own, nothing. The absolute secret of owning other things is to renounce them. Everything is given to him who has refused everything. But he who wishes to grasp for himself, for himself alone, a part of the goods of this world, loses both what he has acquired and everything else. And at the same moment he is incapable of knowing himself, or possessing himself, making himself greater. He has nothing more, not even the things which in appearance belong to him, but to which in reality he belongs; and he has never had his own soul, the one piece of property which is worth possessing. He is the most destitute and despoiled beggar of all the universe. He has nothing. How then can he love others, give to others himself and that which belongs to himself, exercise that loving charity which would conduct him so soon to the Kingdom? He is nothing and he has nothing. He who does not exist cannot change. He who does not possess cannot give. How then can the rich man, who is no longer his own, who has no longer a soul, transform a soul, the only possession of mankind, into something nobler and more precious?

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" This question of Christ's, simple like all revelations, expresses the exact meaning of the prophetic threat. The rich man not only loses eternity, but, pulled down by his wealth, loses his life here below, his present soul, the happiness of his present earthly life.

"Ye cannot serve God and mammon." The Spirit and Gold are two masters who will not tolerate any division or sharing. They are jealous; they insist on having the whole man. And even if he wishes, the man cannot divide himself in two. He must be all here, or all beyond worldly things. For the faithful servant of the spirit, gold is nothing; for him who serves gold, "spirit" is a word without meaning He who chooses the spirit throws away gold and all the things bought by gold; he who desires gold puts an end to the spirit and renounces all the benefits of the spirit: peace, holiness, love, perfect joy. The first is a poor man who can never use up his infinite wealth; the other is a rich man who can never escape out of his infinite poverty. By the mysterious law of renunciation the poor man possesses even that which is not his—the entire universe; through the hard law of perpetual desire, the rich man does not even possess that little which he believes to be his. God gives immensely more than the immensity which He has promised. Mammon takes away even that very little which he promises. He who renounces everything has everything given him; he who wishes a part for himself alone, finds himself at the end with nothing.

When the horrible mystery of wealth is deeply probed, it is easy to see why the masters of men have considered wealth the kingdom of the Demon himself. A thing which costs less than everything else is bought by everything else. A thing which is nothing, the actual value of which is nothing, is bought by giving up everything, is secured by exchanging for it the whole of the soul, the whole of life. The most precious thing is exchanged for the most worthless.

And yet even this infernal absurdity has its reason for being, in the economy of the spirit. Man is so universally and naturally drawn by that nothingness called wealth that he could only be dissuaded from his insensate search for it by putting a price so great, so high, so out of all proportion that the very fact of paying it would be a valid proof of insanity and crime. But not even the conditions of the bargain, the eternal exchanged for the ephemeral, power for servitude, sanctity for damnation, are enough to keep men away from the absurd bargain with the powers of evil. Poor people do not rejoice that they are poor. Their only regret is that they cannot be rich; their souls are contaminated and in peril like those of the wealthy. Almost all of them are involuntarily poor men, who have not known how to make money and yet have lost the spirit; they are only poverty-stricken rich people who have not as yet any cash.

For poverty, voluntarily accepted, joyfully desired, is the only poverty which gives true wealth, spiritual wealth. Absolute poverty frees men for the conquest of the absolute. The Kingdom of Heaven does not promise poor people that they shall become rich, it promises rich people that they shall enter into it when they become freely poor.

SELL EVERYTHING

The tragic paradox implied in wealth justifies the advice given by Jesus to those who wish to follow Him.

They all should give whatever they have beyond their needs to those in want. But the rich man should give everything. To the young man who comes up to ask Him what he ought to do to be among His followers, Jesus answers: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." Giving away wealth is not a loss or a sacrifice. Instead of this, Jesus knows and all those know who understand mankind and wealth that it is a magnificently profitable transaction, an incommensurable gain. "Sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow from thee, turn not thou away, for it is more blessed to give than to receive."

Men must give and give without sparing, light-heartedly and without calculation. He who gives in order to get something back is not perfect. He who gives in order to exchange with others, or for other material things, acquires nothing. The recompense is elsewhere, it is in us. Things are not to be given away that they may be paid for by other things, but by purity and contentment alone. "When thou makest a dinner or a supper call not thy friends nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen nor thy rich neighbors, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind; and thou shalt be blest, for they cannot recompense thee, for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

Even before Jesus' time men had been advised to renounce wealth. Jesus was not the first to find in poverty one of the steps to perfection. The great Vaddhamana, the Jain, or triumpher, added to the commandments of Parswa, founder of the Freed, the doctrine of the renunciation of all possessions. Buddha, his contemporary, exhorted his disciples to a similar renunciation. The Cynics stripped themselves of all material goods to be independent of work and of men, and to be able to consecrate their freed souls to truth. Crates, the Theban nobleman, disciple of Diogenes, distributed his wealth to his fellow-citizens and turned beggar. Plato wished the warriors in his Republic to have no possessions. Dressed in purple and seated at tables inlaid with rare stones, the Stoics pronounced eloquent eulogies on poverty. Aristophanes puts blind Pluto on the stage distributing wealth to rascals alone, almost as though wealth were a punishment.

But in Jesus the love of poverty is not an ascetic rule, nor a proud disguise for ostentation. Timon of Athens, who was reduced to poverty after having fed a crowd of parasites with indiscriminate generosity, was not a poor man as Christ would have men poor. Timon was poor through the fault of his vainglory, to feed his own desire to be called magnanimous and liberal. He gave to everybody, even to those who were not needy. Crates, who stripped himself of all his property to imitate Diogenes, was the slave of pride: he wished to do something different from others, to acquire the name of philosopher and sage. The professional beggary of the Cynics is a picturesque form of pride. The poverty of Plato's warriors is a measure of political prudence. The first republics conquered and flourished as long as the citizens contented themselves, as in old Sparta and old Rome, with strict poverty, and they fell as soon as they valued gold more than sober and modest living. But men of antiquity did not despise wealth in itself. They held it dangerous when it accumulated in the hands of the few, they considered it unjust when it was not spent with judicious liberality. But Plato, who desires for his citizens a condition half-way between need and abundance, puts riches among the good things of human life. He puts it last of all, but he does not forget it. And Aristophanes would kneel before Pluto if the blind God should acquire his sight again and give riches to worthy people.

In the Gospel, poverty is not a philosophical ornament nor a mystic mode. To be poor is not enough to entitle one to citizenship in the Kingdom. Poverty of the body is a preliminary requisite, like humility of the spirit. He who is not convinced that his estate is low never thinks of climbing high; no one can feel a zest for true treasures if he is not freed from all material property,—from that winding-sheet which blinds the eyes and binds down the wings.

When he does not suffer from his poverty, when he glories in his poverty instead of tormenting himself to convert it into wealth, the poor man is certainly much nearer to moral perfection than the rich man. But the rich man who has despoiled himself in favor of the poor and has chosen to live side by side with his new brothers is still nearer perfection than the man who was born and reared in poverty. That he has been touched by a grace so rare and prodigious gives him the right to hope for the greatest blessedness. To renounce what you have never had may be meritorious, because imagination magnifies absent things; but it is the sign of supreme perfectibility to renounce everything that you actually did possess, possessions that were envied by every one.

The poor man who is sober, chaste, simple and contented because he lacks means and occasions for anything else, is inclined to look for a recompense in pleasures which do not cost money, and as it were for a revenge in a spiritual superiority where prosperous people cannot compete with him. But often his virtues come from his impotence or from his ignorance; he does not turn from the right course—he cannot afford to do so—he does not pile up treasure because he possesses only the strictly necessary; he is not drunken and licentious because wine-sellers and women of the streets give no credit. His life, often hard, servile, dark, redeems his faults. And his suffering forces him to lift his eyes towards Heaven in search of consolation. We do so little for the poor that we have no right to judge them. As they are, abandoned by their brothers, kept far from those who could speak to their hearts, avoided by those who shrink from the proximity of their sweaty bodies, excluded from those worlds of intelligence and the arts which might make their poverty more endurable, the poor are, in the universal wretchedness of mankind, the least impure. If they were more loved, they would be better men. How can those who have left them alone in their poverty have the heart to condemn them?

Jesus loved the poor; He loved them for the compassion which He felt for them; He loved them because He felt them nearer to His soul, more prepared to understand Him than other men. He loved them because they constantly gave Him the happiness of service, of giving bread to the hungry, strength to the weak, hope to the unhappy. Jesus loved the poor because He saw that if they were justly treated they would be the most legitimate inhabitants of the Kingdom. He loved the poor because they rendered the renunciation of the rich easier by the stimulus of charity; but most of all He loved the poor men who had been rich and who for the love of the Kingdom had become poor. Their renunciation was the greatest act of faith in His promise. They had given that which considered absolutely is nothing, but in the eyes of the world is everything, for the certainty of sharing in a more perfect life. They had been obliged to conquer in themselves one of the most profoundly rooted instincts of man. Jesus, born a poor man among the poor, for the poor, never left his brothers. He gave to them the fructifying abundance of His divine property. But in His heart He sought the poor man who had not always been poor, the rich man ready to strip himself for His love. He sought him, perhaps He never found him. But He felt this longed-for, unknown brother man tenderly nearer to his heart than all the docile seekers who crowded about Him.

THE DEVIL'S DUNG

Note well, you men who are yet to be born! Jesus was never willing to touch a coin with His hand. Those hands of His which molded the clay of the earth as a cure for blind eyes, those hands which touched the contaminated flesh of lepers and of the dead, those hands which clasped the body of Judas, so much more contaminated than clay, than leprosy, than putrefaction, those white pure healing hands which nothing could sully, never suffered themselves to be touched by one of those metal disks which carry in relief the profiles of the proprietors of the world. Jesus could mention money in His parables; He could see it in the hands of others, but touch it—no! To Him who scorned nothing, money was disgusting. It was repugnant to Him with a repugnance that was like horror. All His nature was in revolt at the thought of a contact with those filthy symbols of wealth.

But one day even Jesus was constrained to look at a piece of money. They asked Him if it was permitted to the true Israelite to pay the tribute, and He answered at once, "Show me the tribute money." They showed it to Him, but He would not take it. It was a Roman coin stamped with the hypocritical face of Augustus. But He wished to seem not to know whose face it was. He asked, "Whose is this image and superscription?" They answered, "Cæsar's." Then He threw into the faces of the wily interrogators the answer which silenced them, "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's."

Give back that which is not yours, money does not belong to us. It is manufactured by the powerful for the needs of power. It is the property of kings and of the kingdom, of that other kingdom which is not ours. The king represents force and is the protector of wealth; but we have nothing to do with violence and reject riches. Our Kingdom has no potentates and has no rich men; the King of our Heaven does not coin money. Money is a means for the exchange of earthly goods, but we do not seek for earthly goods. What little is necessary for us, a little sunshine, a little air, a little water, a piece of bread, a cloak, will be given freely to us by God and by God's friends. Tire yourselves out, you other people, all your lives to gather together a great pile of those round minted tokens. We have no use for them. For us they are definitely superfluous. Therefore we give them back; we give them back to him who has had them coined, to him who has had his portrait put on them, so that all should know that they are his.

Jesus never needed to give back any money because He never possessed any. He gave the order to His disciples not to carry bags for offerings on their journeys. He made one single exception, and that a fearful one. The Gospel tells us that one apostle kept the common purse. This disciple was Judas, and even Judas felt himself forced to give back the payment for his betrayal before disappearing in death. Judas is the mysterious victim sacrificed to the curse of money. Money carries with it, together with the filth of the hands which have clutched and handled it, the inexorable contagion of crime. Among the unclean things which men have manufactured to defile the earth and defile themselves, money is perhaps the most unclean. These counters of coined metal which pass and repass every day among hands still soiled with sweat or blood, worn by the rapacious fingers of thieves, of merchants, of misers; this round and viscid sputum of the Mint, desired by all, sought for, stolen, envied, loved more than love and often more than life; these ugly pieces of stamped matter, which the assassin gives to the cut-throat, the usurer to the hungry, the enemy to the traitor, the swindler to his partner, the simonist to the barterer in religious offices, the lustful to the woman bought and sold, these foul vehicles of evil which persuade the son to kill his father, the wife to betray her husband, the brother to defraud his brother, the wicked poor man to stab the wicked rich man, the servant to cheat his master, the highwayman to despoil the traveler; this money, these material emblems of matter, are the most terrifying objects manufactured by man. Money which has been the death of so many bodies is every day the death of thousands of souls. More contagious than the rags of a man with the pest, than the pus of an ulcer, than the filth of a sewer, it enters into every house, shines on the counters of the money-changers, settles down in money-chests, profanes the pillow of sleep, hides itself in the fetid darkness of squalid back-rooms, sullies the innocent hands of children, tempts virgins, pays the hangman for his work, goes about on the face of the earth to stir up hatred, to set cupidity on fire, to hasten corruption and death.

Bread, already holy on the family board, becomes on the table of the Church the everlasting body of Christ. Money too is the visible sign of a transubstantiation. It is the infamous Host of the Demon. He who loves money and receives it with joy is in visible communion with the Demon. He who touches money with pleasure touches without knowing it the filth of the Demon. The pure cannot touch it, the holy man cannot endure it. They know with unshakable certainty its ugly essence, and they have for money the same horror that the rich man has for poverty.

THE KINGS OF THE NATIONS

"Whose is this image?" asks Jesus when they put the Roman money before his eyes. He knows that face, He knows, as they all do, that Octavius by a sequence of extraordinary good luck became the monarch of the world with the adulatory surname of Augustus. He knows that falsely youthful profile, that head of clustering curls, the great nose that juts forward as if to hide the cruelty of the small mouth, the lips rigorously closed. It is a head, like those of all kings, cut off from the body, cut off below the neck; sinister image of a voluntary and eternal decapitation. Cæsar is the king of the past, the head of the armies, the coiner of silver and gold, fallible administrator of insufficient justice. Jesus is the King of the future, the liberator of servants, the abdicator of wealth, the master of love. There is nothing in common between them. Jesus has come to overthrow the domination of Cæsar, to undo the Roman Empire and every earthly empire, but not to put Himself in Cæsar's place. If men will listen to Him there will never be any Cæsar again. Jesus is not the heir who conspires against the sovereign to take his place. He has come peaceably to remove all rulers. Cæsar is the strongest and most famous of His rivals, but also the most remote, because his force lies in the slothfulness of men, in the weakness of peoples. But One has come who will awaken the sleeping, open the eyes of the blind, give back strength to the weak. When everything is fulfilled and the Kingdom is founded—a Kingdom which needs no soldiers nor judges nor slaves nor money, but only renewed and living souls—Cæsar's empire will vanish like a pile of ashes under the victorious breath of the wind.

As long as Cæsar is there, we can give back to him what is his. For the new man, money is nothing. We give back to Cæsar, vowed to eternal nothingness, that silver nothingness which is none of ours. Jesus is always looking forward with passionate longing to the arrival of the second earthly Paradise and He takes no heed of governors because the new land which He announces will not need governors. A people of holy men who love each other would have no use for Kings, law-courts and armies. On one occasion only does He speak of kings, and then only to overturn the common established idea. "The Kings of the Gentiles," He says to His disciples, "exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so, but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he that is chief, as he that doth serve." It is the theory of perfect equality in human relationship. The great is small, the master is servant, the King is slave. Since, according to Christ's teachings, he who governs must become like him who serves, the opposite is true, and he who serves has the same rights and honors as he who governs. Among the righteous, there may be some more ardent than others; there may be saints who were sinners up to the last day; there may be other innocent ones who were citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven from their birth. Different planes of spiritual greatness may exist as variations of the perfection common to all; but to the end of time every category of superior and inferior, of master and subordinate, shall be abolished. Authority presupposes, even if it is badly wielded, a flock to lead, a minority to punish, bestiality to shackle; but when all men are holy, there will be no more need for commands and obedience, for laws and punishments. The Kingdom of Heaven can dispense with the commands of Force.

In the Kingdom of Heaven men will not hate each other and will no longer desire riches; every reason and need for government will disappear immediately after these two great changes. The name of the path which conducts to perfect liberty is not Destruction but Holiness. And it is not found in the sophistries of Godwin, or of Stirner, or Proudhon, or of Kropotkin, but only in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

SWORD AND FIRE

Every time that the sycophants of the powerful have desired to sanctify the ambition of the ambitious, the violence of the violent, the fierceness of the fierce, the pugnacity of the pugnacious, the conquests of the conquerors, every time that the paid sophists or frenzied orators have tried to reconcile pagan ferocity with Christian gentleness, to use the Cross as the hilt of the sword, to justify blood spilt through hatred by the blood which flowed on Calvary to teach love; every time, in short, that people wish to use the doctrine of peace to legitimatize war, and make Christ surety for Genghis Khan or for Bonaparte or even through refinement of infamy, the outrider of Mahomet, you will see them quote, with the inexorable punctuality of all commonplaces, the celebrated gospel text, which everybody knows by heart and very few have ever understood.

"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." Some more learned add, "I am come to send fire on the earth." Others rush forward to present the decisive verse, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

What angel of eloquence, what supernatural enlightener, can ever reveal to these hardened quoters the true meaning of the words which they repeat with such light frivolity? They do not look at the words which come before and after; they pay no attention to the occasion on which they were spoken. They do not imagine for a moment that they can have another meaning from the common one.

When Jesus says that He has come to bring a sword,—or as it is written in the parallel passage of Luke, "Discord," He is speaking to His Disciples who are on the point of departing to announce the coming of the Kingdom. And immediately after having spoken of the sword, He explains with familiar examples what He meant to say: "For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three." The sword therefore does not mean war; it is a figure of speech which dignifies division. The sword is what divides, cuts in two, disunites; and the preaching of the gospel shall divide men of the same family. Because among men there are those deaf and those who hear, those who are slow and those who are quick, those who deny and those who believe. Until all are converted and "brothers in the Word," discord will reign on earth. But discord is not war, is not massacre. Those who have heard and believe—the Christians—will not assault those who do not hear and do not believe. They will, it is true, take up arms against their refractory and stubborn brothers, but these arms will be preaching, example, pardon, love. Those who are not converted perhaps will begin real warfare, the warfare of violence and blood, but they will begin it exactly because they are not converted, precisely because they are not yet Christians. The triumph of the Gospel is the end of all wars, of wars between man and man, between family and family, between caste and caste, between people and people. If the Gospel at first is the cause of separations and discord the fault is not in the truths taught in the Gospel but in the fact that these truths are not yet practiced by all.

When Jesus proclaims that he comes to bring fire, only a literal-minded barbarian can think of murderous and destructive fire, worthy auxiliary of human warfare. "What will I if it be already kindled!" The fire desired by the Son of Man is the fire of purification, of enthusiasm, the ardor of sacrifice, the refulgent flame of love. Until all souls are burning and consumed in that fire, the word of the Gospel will be but useless sound, and the Kingdom still far away. To renew the contaminated and hateful family of men, a wonderful outburst of grief and of passion is needed. The complacent must suffer, the cold must burn, the insensible must cry out, the tepid must flame like torches in the night. All the filth accumulated in the secret life of men, all the sediments of sin which make of every soul an offensive sewer, all the corruption which shuts the ears and suffocates the hearts, must be burned up in this miraculous spiritual fire, which Jesus came to kindle in our hearts.

But to pass beyond this wall of flame there is need for strength of soul and a boldness not possessed by all, possessed only by the valorous; and thus Jesus can say, "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force." The word violent has as a matter of fact in the text the evident meaning of "strong," of men who know how to take doors by assault without hesitating or trembling. "Sword," "fire," "violence," are words which are not to be taken in the literal sense, so pleasing to the advocates of massacres. They are figurative words which we are forced to use to reach the torpid imagination of the crowds. The sword is the symbol of the divisions between those first persuaded and those who are last in believing; fire is purifying love; violence is the strength necessary to make oneself over and to arrive on the threshold of the Kingdom. Any one who understands this passage in any other way either does not know how to read, or is determined to misread.

Jesus is the man of Peace. He has come to bring Peace. The Gospels are nothing but proclamations and instructions for Peace. The very night of His birth celestial voices sang in the sky the prophetic augury: "Peace on Earth to men of good will." On the Mount one of the first promises which flowed from the heart and from the lips of Christ is that directed to the peacemakers, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." When the apostles are ready to depart on their mission He commands them to wish peace to all the houses where they enter. To the disciples, to His friends, He counsels, "Have peace one with another." Drawing near to Jerusalem, He looks at it pityingly and exclaims, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" and the terrible night on the Mount of Olives, while the mercenaries armed with swords are binding Him, He pronounces the supreme condemnation of violence, "For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." He understands the evils of discord, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand." And in His talk on the last things, in the grand apocalyptic prophecy, He announces among the terrible signs of the end together with famine, earthquakes and tribulation, also wars. "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars. . . . For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom."

For Jesus discord is an evil; war is a crime. His God is not the old Lord of Battles. The apologists for great massacres confuse the Old and the New Testament. But the New is new exactly because it transforms the Old.

Only when considered as a punishment can war be thought of as divine. War is the terrible retribution of men who have recourse to war; it is the cruelest manifestation of the hatred which broods and boils in human hearts, the hatred which drives men to take up arms to destroy one another. War is at the same time a crime and its own punishment.

But when hate is abolished in every heart, war will be incomprehensible: our most terrible punishment will disappear together with our greatest sin. Then at last will arrive the day longed for by Isaiah when, "they shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

That day announced by Isaiah is the day on which the Sermon on the Mount shall become the only law recognized on earth.

ONE FLESH ONLY

Jesus sanctions the union of man and woman even in the flesh. As long as kings remain, we are to give back to them the coins stamped with their names; as long as men are not like angels the human race must perpetuate itself.

The Family and the State, imperfect expedients compared with heavenly beatitude, are necessary during our terrestrial probation; and since they are necessary they should at least become less impure and less imperfect. As long as rulers exist, at least the man who rules should feel himself the equal of the man who serves. As long as marriage exists, the union between man and woman should be eternal and faithful.

In marriage Jesus sees first of all the joining of two bodies. On this point He ratifies the metaphor of the Old Law, "So then they are no more twain, but one flesh." Husband and wife are one body, inseparable. This man shall never have another woman; this woman shall never know another man until death divides them. The mating of male and female, when it is not the expression of careless wantonness, or furtive fornication, when it is the meeting of two healthy virginities, when it is preceded by free choice, by a chaste passion, by a public and consecrated covenant, has an almost mystic character which nothing can cancel. The choice is irrevocable, the passion is confirmed, the compact is for eternity. Within the two bodies clinging to each other with bodily desire, there are two souls which recognize each other and find each other in love. Their flesh becomes one flesh; their two souls become one soul.

The two have been fused into one, and from this communion will be born a new creature formed of the essence of both, which will be the visible form of their union. Love makes them like God, creators of a new and miraculous creation.

But this Duality of the flesh and of the spirit—the most perfect among imperfect human relations—should never be disturbed or interrupted. Adultery corrupts it, divorce destroys it. Adultery treacherously corrodes the union; divorce repudiates it definitely. Adultery is a secret divorce founded upon untruth and betrayal; divorce followed by another marriage is sanctioned adultery.

Jesus always condemns adultery and divorce in the most solemn and absolute manner. His whole nature holds unfaithfulness in horror. There will come a day, he warns people, in speaking of heavenly life, in which men and women will not marry; but up to that day marriage should have at least all the perfections possible to its imperfection. And Jesus who always goes below the surface of things does not call adulterer only the man who robs his brother of his wife, but also the man who looks at her in the street with lustful eyes. The man who has underhand relations with another man's wife is an adulterer, but no less an adulterer is he who, having put aside his own wife, marries another. On one occasion alone, He seems to admit the possibility of divorce to the husband of an adulteress; but the crime of the repudiated wife could never justify the crime which the betrayed man would commit in taking another wife.

Confronted with a law so absolute and so rigorous, even the Disciples took alarm. "If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."

Marriage is a concession to human nature, and to the propagation of life. "All men cannot receive this saying," are not capable of remaining chaste, virgin, and alone, but only "they to whom it is given." Perfect celibacy is a grace, a reward of the victory of the spirit over the body.

Any man who wishes to give all his love to a great undertaking must condemn himself to chastity. He cannot serve both humanity and the individual. The man who has a difficult mission to carry out, demanding all his strength up to the last of his days, cannot tie himself to a woman. Marriage means abandoning oneself to another being—but the Saviour must abandon himself to all other beings. The union of two souls is not enough for him—and it would make more difficult, perhaps impossible, union with all other souls. The responsibilities which come with the choice of a mate, the birth of children, the creation of a little community in the midst of the great community of the human race, are so heavy that they would be a daily hindrance to undertakings infinitely more serious. The man who wishes to lead other men, to transform them, cannot bind himself for all his life to one being alone. He would need to be faithless to his wife or to his mission. He loves all his brothers too much to love one only of his sisters. The Hero is solitary. Solitude is his penalty and his greatness. He renounces the pleasures of marital love, but the love which is in his heart, when communicated to all men, is multiplied into a sublimation of sacrifice surpassing all earthly joys. The man with no mate is alone, but is free; his soul, unhampered by common and material thoughts, can rise to the heights. He does not beget children of his own flesh, but he brings to a second birth the children of his spirit.

It is not given to every one, however, to resist and abstain. "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." The foundation of the Kingdom needs all men who will give all their souls to it; the lusts of the flesh, even when confined to legitimate marriage, are weakening for him who should give all his attention to the things of the spirit.

Those who will know the resurrection of the great day of triumph will have no further temptations. In the Kingdom of Heaven the joining of man and woman, even sanctified as it is by the permanence of marriage, will exist no more. Its real end is the creation of new human beings, but in that day Death will be conquered and the everlasting renewing of the generations will no longer be necessary. "For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven."

With this attainment of eternal and angelic life—the two promises and the two certainties of Christ—what has seemed endurable will become unthinkable, that which seemed pure will become vile, that which was holy will become imperfect. In that supreme and happy world all the trials of the human race will be over. A hasty mating with a stolen woman was enough for the primitive bestial man. Man rose to the higher level of marriage, to union with one woman alone; the saint rose higher yet, to voluntary chastity. But the man who has become an angel in Heaven, who is all spirit and love, will have conquered the flesh even in memory. In a world where there will be no poor, sick, unhappy or enemies, his love will be transfigured into a superhuman contemplation.

The cycle of births will then be closed. The Fourth Kingdom will be forever established. The citizens of the Kingdom will be eternally the same, themselves and no other through all the centuries. Woman will no longer bring forth her young with suffering. The sentence of exile will be revoked, the Serpent will be conquered; the Father will joyfully welcome his wandering son. Paradise will be found again and will never more be lost.

FATHERS AND SONS

Jesus was speaking in a house, perhaps at Capernaum, and men and women, all hungering for life and justice, all needing comfort and consolation, had filled the house, had pressed close around Him, and were looking at Him as they would look at their Father returned to them, their Brother healing them, their Benefactor saving them. They were so hungry for His words, these men and women, that Jesus and His friends had not stopped to take a mouthful of food. He had spoken for a long time, and yet they would have liked Him to go on speaking till nightfall, without ever stopping for an instant. They had been waiting for Him for so long! Their fathers and their mothers had waited for Him in wretchedness and dumb resignation for thousands of years. They themselves had waited for Him, year after year, in dull wretchedness. Night after night they had longed for a ray of light, a promise of happiness, a loving word. And now before them was He who was the reward of their long vigil. Now they could wait no longer. These men and these women crowded about Jesus like privileged and impatient creditors who finally have before them the Divine Debtor, for whom they have been eternally waiting; and they claimed their share down to the last penny. He certainly should be able to get along without eating bread just this one time—for centuries and centuries their fathers had been forced to go without the Bread of Truth; for years and years they themselves had not been able to satisfy their hunger for the Bread of Hope.

Jesus therefore went on talking to the people who had filled the house. He repeated the most touching figures of His inspiration, told the most persuasive stories of the Kingdom, looked at them with those luminous eyes which shone down into the soul as the morning sun penetrates the shut-in darkness of a house.

Any one of us would give what remains of his life to be looked at by those eyes, to gaze for a moment into those eyes shining with infinite tenderness; to listen for a moment only to that thrilling voice, changing the Semitic vernacular into melodious music. Those men and women who are now dead, those poor men, those poor women, those wretched people who to-day are dust in the air of the desert, or clay under the hoofs of the camels, those men and those women whom in their lifetime no one envied, and whom we the living are forced to envy after their remote and obscure death; those men and those women heard that voice, saw those eyes.

But there came a stir and voices were heard at the door of the house: some one wished to come in. One of those present told Jesus, "Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee." But Jesus did not stir, "Who is my mother or my brethren?" And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother."

My family is all here and I have no other family. The ties of blood do not count unless they are confirmed in the spirit. My father is the Father who made me like unto Him in the perfection of righteousness; my brothers are the poor who weep; my sisters are the women who have left their loves for Love. He did not mean with these words to deny the Virgin of Sorrows, of whose womb He was the fruit; He meant to say that from the day of His voluntary exile He belonged no more to the little family of Nazareth, but only to His mission as Saviour, to the great family of mankind.

In the new organization of salvation, spiritual affiliations surpass the simple relationships of the flesh. "If any come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Individual love must disappear in universal love. We must choose between the old affections of the old mankind and the unique love of the New Man.

The family will disappear when men, in the celestial life, shall be better than men. In the world as it is, the family is an impediment for him who helps others to rise to higher things. "And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father which is in heaven." He who leaves his family shall be infinitely rewarded. "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children for the kingdom of God's sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."

Your Heavenly Father will never forsake you, your brothers in the Kingdom will never betray you; but the fathers and the brothers of earthly life might become your assassins. "And ye shall be betrayed both by parents and brethren and kinsfolks and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death."

And yet fathers at least should be faithful, because, according to Jesus, fathers have more duties toward their sons than sons toward their fathers. The Old Law recognizes only the first. "Honor thy father and thy mother," said Moses. But he does not add, "Protect and love thy children." Children seemed to Moses to be the property of those who had begotten them. Life in those times seemed so fair and precious that children were always thought to be in debt to their parents. They were to remain servants forever, everlastingly submissive. They should live only for old age, by the orders of old age.

Here also the divine genius of the Overthrower sees what is lacking in the old ideals and insists upon righting the balance. Fathers should give without sparing and without rest; even if the children are ungrateful, even if they abandon their father, even if they are unworthy in the eyes of the platitudinous sagacity of the world. The Paternoster is a prayer of sons to a Father. It is the prayer which every child might address to his father. He asks for daily bread; the remission of sins, pardon for his failings, and daily protection against evil.

And yet fathers, even when they give everything, are sometimes forsaken. If their sons leave them to throw themselves into evil ways, they must be forgiven as soon as they come back, as the Prodigal Son in the parable was forgiven. If they leave their fathers to seek out a higher and more perfect life—like those who are converted to the Kingdom—they will be rewarded a thousand times in this life and the next.

But from every point of view, fathers are debtors. The tremendous responsibility which they have accepted in giving life to a new human being must be met. Like the Heavenly Father, they must give to those of their children who ask and to those who keep silence, to the worthy and the unworthy, to those who sit about the family board and to those who are wanderers over the earth, to the good and to the bad, to the first and to the last. They must never become weary, not even with the children who flee from them, with those who offend against them, with those who deny them.

"Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?" Who will refuse to a son who departs asking nothing, the supreme gift of a love which asks no requital?

LITTLE CHILDREN

All men are children of the Son of Man, but no one could call Him father in the flesh. Among the disappointing joys of men perhaps the only joy which does not disappoint is to hold in one's arms or on one's knees a child whose face is rosy with blood which is also yours, who laughs at you with the dawning splendor of his eyes, who stammers out your name, who uncovers the springs of the lost tenderness of your childhood; to feel against your adult flesh, hardened by winds and the sun, this fresh smooth young flesh where the blood seems still to have kept some of the sweetness of milk, flesh that seems made of warm, living petals. To feel that this flesh is yours, shaped in the flesh of your mate, nourished with the milk of her breasts; to watch the birth and slow flowering of the soul in this flesh; to be the sole father of this unique creature, of this flower opening in the light of the world; to recognize your own aspect in his childish eyes, to hear your own voice through his fresh lips; to grow young again through this child in order to be worthy of him; to be nearer to him;

to make yourself younger, better, purer; to forget all the years which bring us silently nearer to death, to forget the pride of manhood, the vanity of wisdom, the first wrinkles on the face, the expiations, the ignominies of life and to become a virgin again beside this virginity, calm beside this calmness, good with a goodness never known before; to be in short the father of a child of your own, this is certainly the highest human pleasure given to a man who has a soul within his clay.

Jesus, whom no one called Father, was drawn to children as to sinners. Lover of the absolute, He loved only extremes. Complete innocence and complete downfall were for Him pledges of salvation. Innocence because it does not need to be cleansed; abject degradation because it feels more keenly the need to be cleansed. The people in danger are those midway; men half depraved and half intact; men who are foul within and wish to seem upright and just; those who have lost with their childhood their native purity and do not yet recognize the filthiness of their inner depravity.

Jesus loved children with tenderness and sinners with compassion; the pure and those who stood in dire need of purification. His hand willingly caressed the floating hair of the newly weaned child and did not draw back from the perfumed tresses of the prostitute. He drew near to sinners because they often had not the strength to come to Him; but He called children to Him because children know by instinct who loves them, and run willingly to him. Mothers brought their children to Him to have Him touch them. The Disciples, with their habitual roughness, cried out on them—and Jesus once more was obliged to reprove them, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."

The Disciples, bearded men, proud of their authority as mature men and as lieutenants of their future Lord, could not understand why their Master consented to waste time with children who could not yet speak plainly and could not understand the meaning of grown people's words. But Jesus set in their midst one of these children and said: "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. . . . And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

Here, too, the transposition of values is complete. In the Old Law, the child was to respect the grown man, to revere and imitate the old man. The little child was to take the grown person as his model. Perfection was supposed to lie in years of maturity, or, better yet, in old age. The child was respected only as containing the hope for future manhood. Jesus reversed these ideas; grown people were to take their example from little children, elders were to try to become like infants, fathers were to imitate their sons. In the world as it was, as it is, controlled by force, where the only valued art is the art of acquiring riches and overcoming others, children are at the most only human larvæ. In the New World announced by Christ, which will be governed by fearless purity and innocent love, children are the arch-types of happy citizens. The child who seems an imperfect man is thus more perfect than the grown man. The man who imagines that he has come into the fullness of his time and of his soul is to turn back, despoil himself of his complacent complexities and return to his first youth. From having been imitated he becomes an imitator, from his position as first he becomes last.

Jesus reaffirms His own likeness to a child, and declares with no hesitation that He is identical with the children who seek Him out, "And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me." The saint, the poor man, the poet, present themselves under this new form which sums them all up: the child, pure and candid as the saint, bare and needy as the poor man, marveling and loving like the poet.

Jesus loves children not only as unconscious models for those who wish to attain the perfection of the Kingdom, but as the actual mediums of truth. Their ignorance is more illumined than the doctrines of learned men; their ingenuousness is more powerful than the intellect which shows itself in reasoning words. Only a clear and untarnished mirror can reflect the images of the revelation.

"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Their own wisdom stands in the way of the wise, because they think they understand everything. Their own intelligence is an impediment for the intelligent, because they are not capable of understanding any other light than that of the intellect. Only the simple can understand simplicity, the innocent, innocence, the loving, love. The revelation of Jesus, open only to virginal souls, is all humility, purification and love. But man, as he grows older, becomes more complicated, more corrupt, prouder, and learns the horrible pleasure of hatred. Every day he goes further from Paradise, becomes less capable of finding it. He takes pleasure in his steady downfall and glories in the useless learning which hides from him the only needful truth.

To find the new Paradise, the Kingdom of innocence and love, it is needful to become like children who have already what others must strive and struggle to regain.

Jesus seeks out the company of sinners, of men and women, but He feels Himself with his true brothers only when He lays His hands on the heads of the children whom the Galilean mothers bring to Him as an offering.

MARTHA AND MARY

Women also loved Jesus. He who had the form and flesh of a man, who left His mother and never had a wife, was surrounded all His life and after His death by the warmth of feminine tenderness. The chaste wanderer was loved by women as no man was ever loved, or ever can be loved again. The chaste man, who condemned adultery and fornication, had over women the inestimable prestige of innocence.

All women, who are not mere females, kneel before him who does not bow before them. The husband with all his legal love and authority, the satyr with all his mistresses, the eloquent adulterer, the bold ravisher, have not so much power over the spirit of women as he who loves them without touching them, he who saves them without asking for even a kiss as reward. Woman, slave of her body, of her weakness, her desire and of the desire of the male, is drawn to him who frees her, to him who cures her, to him who loves her and asks no more from her than a cup of water, a smile, a little silent attention.

Women loved Jesus. They stopped when they saw Him pass, they followed Him when they saw Him speaking to His friends, they drew near to the house where He had gone in, they brought their children to Him, they blessed Him loudly, they touched His garment to be cured of their ills, they were happy when they could serve Him. All of them might have cried out to Him, like the woman who raised her voice in the midst of the multitude: "Blessed is the womb that bare ye, and the paps which thou hast sucked."

Many followed Him to death. Salome, mother of the Sons of Thunder; Mary, mother of James the less; Martha and Mary of Bethany.

They would have liked to be His sisters, His servants, His slaves; to serve Him, to set bread before Him, to pour Him wine, to wash His garments, to anoint His tired feet and His flowing hair. Some of them were fortunate enough to be allowed to follow Him, and knew the still greater good fortune of helping Him with their money . . . "and the twelve were with him, And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary, called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, And Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance." Women, in whom piety is a native gift of the heart before it is acquired through desire for perfection, were, as they have always been, more generous than men.

When He appears in the house of Lazarus, two women, the two sisters of the man brought back from death, seem distracted with joy. Martha rushes towards Him to see what He needs, if He wishes to wash, if He wishes to eat at once, and, bringing Him into the house, she leads Him to the couch that He may lie down, puts over Him a blanket lest He be cold, and runs with a pitcher to get fresh cool water. Then, on her return, she sets to work to prepare for the pilgrim a fine meal, much more abundant than the ordinary dinner of the family. With all haste she lights a great fire, goes to get fresh fish, new-laid eggs, figs and olives; she borrows from one neighbor a piece of new-killed lamb, from another a costly perfume, from another richer than she, a flowered dish. She pulls out from the linen-chest the newest table-cloth, and brings up from the wine-cellar the oldest wine. And while the wood snaps and sparkles in the fire and the water in the kettle begins to simmer, poor Martha, bustling, flushed, hurrying, sets the table, runs between the kneading-trough and the fire, glances at the waiting Master, at the street to see if her brother is coming home, and at her sister, who is doing nothing at all.

For when Jesus passed the sill of their house, Mary fell into a sort of motionless ecstasy from which nothing could arouse her. She sees only Jesus, hears nothing but Jesus' voice. There is nothing else in the world for her at that moment. She cannot have enough of looking at Him, of listening to Him, of feeling Him there, living, close to her. If He glances at her, she is happy to be looked at; if He does not look at her, she fixes her eyes on Him; if He speaks, His words drop one by one into her heart, there to remain to her death; if He is silent, she draws from His silence a more direct revelation. And she is almost troubled by the bustling and stepping about of her sister. Why should Martha think that Jesus needs an elaborate dinner? Mary is seated at His feet and does not move even if Martha or Lazarus call her. She is at the service of Jesus, but in another way. She has given Him her soul, only her soul, but such a loving soul! And the work of her hands would be inopportune and superfluous. She is a contemplative soul, an adorer. She will take action only to cover the dead body of her God with perfumes. She would move quickly enough if He should ask of her all her life-blood.

But the rest, all this business of Martha, is only material activity which is no concern of hers.

Women loved Him and He requited this love with compassion. No woman who turned to Him was sent away disconsolate. The sorrow of the widow of Nain made Him sorrow, so that He brought to life her dead son; the prayers of the Canaanite woman, although she was a foreigner to Him, wrought on Him to cure her daughter; the unknown woman which had a "spirit of infirmity" eighteen years, and was bowed together and could in no wise lift herself, was cured, although it was on the Sabbath day and the rulers of the synagogue cried, "Sacrilege!" In the first part of His wanderings He cured Peter's wife's mother of fever and the Magdalene of evil spirits. He brought to life the daughter of Jairus, and cured that unknown woman who had suffered for twelve years from a bloody flux.

The learned men of His time had no esteem for women in spiritual matters. They tolerated their presence at the sacred festivals, but they never would have thought of teaching high and secret doctrines to any woman. "The words of the Law," says a rabbinical proverb of that time, "rather than teach them to a woman, burn them up!" Jesus on the other hand did not hesitate to speak to them of the highest mysteries. When He went alone to the well of Sichar, and the Samaritan woman who had had five husbands came there, He did not hesitate to proclaim His message to her, although she was a woman and an enemy of His people. "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." His Disciples came up, and could not understand what the Master was doing. "And marvelled that he talked with the woman." They did not yet know that the Church of Christ would make a woman the link between the sons and the Son—the woman who unites in herself the two supreme possibilitles of Woman: the Virgin Mother who suffered for us from the night in Bethlehem until the night of Golgotha.

WORDS WRITTEN ON THE SAND

On another occasion at Jerusalem, Jesus found Himself before a woman—the Adulteress. A hooting crowd pushed her forward. The woman, hiding her face with her hands and with her hair, stood before Him, without speaking. Jesus had taught that wife and husband should be perfectly one, and He detested adultery. But He detested still more the cowardice of tale-bearers, the hounding by the merciless, the impudence of sinners presuming to set themselves up as judges of sin. Jesus could not absolve the woman who had brutally disobeyed the law of God, but He did not wish to condemn her, because her accusers had no right to be seeking her death. And He stooped down and with His finger wrote upon the ground. It is the first and last time that we see Jesus lower Himself to this trivial operation. No one has ever known what He wrote at that moment, standing there before the woman trembling in her shame, like a deer set upon by a pack of snarling hounds. He chose the sand on which to write expressly that the wind might carry away the words, which would perhaps frighten men if they could read them. But the shameless persecutors insisted that the woman should be stoned. Then Jesus lifted Himself up, looked deep into their eyes and souls, one by one: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

We are all of us guilty of the faults of our brothers. From the first to the last we are all daily accomplices, although too often unpunished. The Adulteress would not have betrayed her husband if men had not tempted her, if her husband had made himself better loved; the thief would not rob if the rich man's heart were not so hard; the assassin would not kill if he had not been harshly treated; there would be no prostitutes if men knew how to mortify their wantonness. Only the innocents would have the right to judge; but on this earth there are no innocents, and even if there were, their mercy would be stronger than justice itself.

Such thoughts had never occurred to those angry spies, but Christ's words troubled them. Every one of them thought of his own betrayals, his own secret and perhaps recent sins of the flesh. Every soul there was like a sewer which when the stone is raised exhales a fetid gust of nauseous vapor. The old men were the first to go. Then, little by little, all the others, avoiding each other's eyes, scattered and dispersed. The open place was empty. Jesus had again stooped down to write upon the ground. The woman had heard the shuffling of the departing feet, and heard no longer any voice crying for her death, but she did not dare to raise her eyes because she knew that One alone had remained, the Innocent,—the only one who had the right to throw against her the deadly stones. Jesus for the second time lifted Himself up and saw no one.

"Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?"

"No man, Lord."

"Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more."

And for the first time the Adulteress dared to look in the face of her liberator. She did not understand His words. What she had done was evidently a sin in His eyes because he commanded her to "sin no more"; and yet he had so acted that the others did not condemn her. And now He also did not wish to condemn her. What man was this so different from all the others, who hated sin but forgave the sinner? She would have wished to turn to Him with a question, to murmur a word of thanks, to reward Him at least with a smile, because her soul was weak and her lips beautiful. But Jesus had begun again to write on the ground of the court, His head lowered, and she saw only the silky waves of His hair shining in the sun, and His finger moving slowly over the sunlit earth.

THE SINNER

But no woman loved Him so much as the woman who anointed Him with nard and bathed Him with her tears in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Every one of us has seen that picture in imagination; the weeping woman with her hair falling over the feet of the Wanderer; and yet the true meaning of the episode is understood by very few, so greatly has it been disfigured by both the ordinary and the literary interpretations. The decadents of the last century, careful workmen in lascivious preciosity, who swarm to the scent of corruption like flies to filth and crows to carrion, have sought out in the Gospel those women who are redolent of sin. And they have made such women their own, adorning them with the velvet of adjectives, the silk of verbs, the jewelry and precious stones of metaphors; the unknown repentant woman, named Mary Magdalene, the unknown adulteress of Jerusalem, Salome the dancer, the sinister Herodias.

The episode of this anointing has been profoundly misrepresented by such writers. It is simpler and infinitely more profound. The praise of Jesus for the woman who brought Him nard is not praise of carnal sin, or of common love as it is commonly understood by men.

This sinning woman who silently entered the house of Simon with her box of alabaster was no longer a sinner. She had seen Jesus, had known Him before that day. And she was no longer a woman for hire; she had heard Jesus speak, and was no longer the public woman, flesh on sale for masculine desires. She had heard the voice of Jesus, had listened to His words; His voice had troubled her, His words had shaken her. The woman who had belonged to every one had learned that there is a love more beautiful than lust, a poverty richer than clinking coins. When she came to the house of Simon she was not the woman she had been, the woman whom the men of the countryside had pointed out sneeringly, the woman whom the Pharisee knew and despised. Her soul was changed, all her life was changed. Now her flesh was chaste; her hand was pure; her lips no longer knew the bitter taste of rouge, her eyes had learned to weep. From now on, according to the promise of the King, she was ready to enter into the Kingdom.

Without taking all this for granted it is impossible to understand the story which follows. The sinning woman wished to reward her Saviour with a token of her gratitude. She took one of the most costly things left to her, a sealed box full of nard, perhaps the gift of a chance lover, thinking to anoint her King's head with this costly oil. Hers was an act of public gratitude. The sinning woman wished publicly to thank Him who had cleansed her soul, who had brought her heart to life, who had lifted her up out of shame, who had given her a hope more glorious than all joys.

She went into the house with her box of alabaster clasped to her breast, timid and shrinking as a little girl on her first day of school, as a released prisoner in his first moment outside the prison. She went in silently with her little box of perfume, raising her eyes for only a moment to see at a glance where Jesus was reclining. She went up to the couch, her knees trembling under her, her hands shaking, her delicate eyelids quivering, because she felt they were all looking at her, all those men's eyes were fixed on her, staring at her beautiful swaying body, wondering what she was about to do.

She broke the seal of the little alabaster flask, and poured half the oil on the head of Jesus. The large drops shone on His hair like scattered gems. With loving hands she spread the transparent ointment on the curls and did not stay her hand till every hair was softened, silky and shining. The whole room was filled with the fragrance; every eye was fixed on her with astonishment.

The woman, still silent, took up the opened box and knelt by the feet of the Peace-bringer. She poured the remaining oil into her hand and gently, gently rubbed the right foot and the left with the loving care of a young mother who bathes her first child, for the first time. Then she could control herself no longer, she could restrain no longer the great burst of tenderness which filled her heart, made her throat ache and brought tears to her eyes. She would have liked to speak, to say that this was her thanks, her simple, pure, heartfelt thanks for the great help she had received, for the new light which had unsealed her eyes. But in such a moment, with all those men there, how could she find the right words, words worthy of the wonderful grace, worthy of Him? And besides, her lips trembled so that she could not pronounce two words together; her speech would have been only a stammering broken by sobs. Then not being able to speak with her lips, she spoke with her eyes: her tears fell down one by one, swift and hot on the feet of Jesus, like so many silent thank-offerings.

Weeping freed her heart of its oppression; the tears relaxed the tension. She saw and felt nothing now but an inexpressible delight which she had never known on her mother's knees or in men's arms; it ran through all her blood, made her tremble, pierced her with its poignant joy, shook all her being in that supreme ecstasy in which joy is a pain and sorrow a joy, in which pain and joy become one mighty emotion.

She wept over her past life, the miserable life of her vigil. She thought of her poor flesh sullied by men. She had been forced to have a smile for them all, she had been forced to offer her luxurious bed and her perfumed body to them all. With all of them she had been forced to pretend a pleasure she did not feel. She had been forced to show a smiling face to those whom she despised, to those whom she hated. She had slept beside the thief who had stolen the money to pay her. She had kissed the lips of the murderer and of the fugitive from justice; she had been forced to endure the acrid breath and the repellent fancies of the drunkard.

Never, on a kindly summer night when the eastern sky is all a flashing splendor, had she known the welcoming kiss of a husband who had chosen her, virgin among virgins, that she should be one with him till death. She was outside the community and the laws. She was cut off from her people. She was separated from them all. Women envied her and detested her; men desired her and defamed her.

THE SECOND BAPTISM

But at the same time the tears of the weeping woman were tears of joy and exaltation. She was weeping not only because of her shame, now forever canceled, but because of the poignant sweetness of her life beginning anew.

She was weeping for her virginity restored, for her soul rescued from evil, her purity miraculously recovered, her condemnation forever revoked. Her tears were the tears of joy at the second birth, of exultation for truth discovered, of light-heartedness for her sudden conversion, for the saving of her soul, for the miraculous hope which had released her from the degradation of the material and raised her to the illumination of the spirit. The drops of nard and her tears were so many thank-offerings for this incredible blessing.

And yet it was not alone for her own sorrow and her own joy that she wept. The tears which bathed the feet of Jesus were also shed for Him.

The unknown woman had anointed her King like a king of olden times. She had anointed His head as the high priests had anointed the kings of Judea; she had anointed His feet as the lords and guests anointed themselves on festal days. But at the same time the weeping woman had prepared Him for death and burial.

Jesus, about to enter Jerusalem, knew that those were the last days of His life in the flesh. He said to His disciples, "For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial." Still living, He was embalmed by a woman's compassion.

Christ was to receive before His death a third baptism, the baptism of infamy, the baptism of the supreme insult; prætorian soldiers were to spit upon his face. But He had now received the baptism of glory and the baptism of death. He was anointed like a king about to triumph in His celestial kingdom. He was perfumed like a corpse about to be laid in the tomb. This anointing unites the twin mysteries of His Messiahship and of the crucifixion.

The poor sinning woman, mysteriously chosen for this prophetic rite, had perhaps a confused presentiment of the appalling meaning of this premonitory embalming. Love's second-sight, stronger in women than in men, the foresight of exalted and deep emotion, may have made her feel that this body perfumed and caressed by her was in a few days to be an icy, blood-stained corpse. Other women, perhaps she herself, were to go to the tomb to cover Him for the last time with aromatics, but they would not find Him. He who was now feasting with His friends was at that time to be at the doors of another Hell. Feeling this presentiment, the weeping woman let her tears fall on Jesus' feet to the astonishment of all the others, who did not know and did not understand.

Now the feet of the Saviour, the feet of the condemned one, are all bathed with tears, the salt of the tears mingling with the perfume of the nard. The poor sinning woman does not know how to dry those feet, wet by her tears. She has no white cloth with her, and her garment does not seem to her worthy to touch her Lord's flesh. Then she thinks of her hair, her long hair which has been so much admired for its fine silkiness. She loosens the braids, slips out the pins, unclasps the fastenings. The blue-black mass of her tresses falls over her face, hiding her flushed face and her compassion. And taking up the masses of these flowing curls in her hands, she slowly dries the feet which have brought her King into that house.

Now her tears are ended. All her tears are shed and dried. Her part is done, but only Jesus has understood her silence.

SHE LOVED MUCH

Among the men who were present at this dinner there was no one except Jesus who understood the loving service of the nameless woman. But all, struck with wonder, were silent. They did not understand, but they respected obscurely the solemnity of the enigmatic ceremony. All except two, who wished to interpret the woman's action as an offense to the guest. These two were the Pharisee and Judas Iscariot. The first said nothing, but his expression spoke more clearly than words. The second, the Traitor, presuming on his familiarity with the Master, ventured to speak.

Simon thought to himself, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him, for she is a sinner." The old hypocrite had for the paid woman the scorn of those who have had much to do with them, or of those who have never known them at all. Like his brothers he belonged to the endless cemetery of white sepulchers, which within are full of foulness. It is enough for such men to avoid physical contact with what they think is impure, even if their souls are sinks of iniquity. Their morals are systems of ablutions and washings; they would leave a wounded man to die, abandoned on the road, for fear of staining themselves with blood; they would let a poor man suffer hunger to avoid touching money on the Sabbath day: like all men they commit thefts, adulteries, and murders, but they wash their hands so many times a day that they imagine them as clean as those of babes.

He had read the Law, and there were still ringing in his ears the execrations and anathemas of Old Israel against prostitutes. "There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel. . . . Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the Lord thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination to the Lord thy God." And Simon, the wise burgher, remembered with equal satisfaction the admonition of the author of the Proverbs: "For a whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit. . . . For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread." The old Jew would perhaps not have felt so bitterly about prostitutes, if they cost nothing! But they are capable, those shameless women, of eating up a patrimony! The old proprietor could not be reconciled to one of those dangerous women in his house, to the fact that she had touched his guest. He knew that the prostitute Rehab had made victory possible for Joshua and that she was the only one to escape from the massacre of Jericho, but he remembered that the invincible Samson, terror of the Philistines, had been betrayed by a worthless woman. The Pharisee could not understand how a man acclaimed by the people as a prophet should not have understood what sort of woman had come to bestow on Him this discreditable honor; but Jesus had read in the heart of the sinning woman and in the heart of Simon, and answered with the parable of the two debtors. "There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged."

And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon: "Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

"Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

"My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

"Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

"And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. . . . Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

The parable and the comment of Jesus show how great, even to-day, is the lack of understanding of this episode. Every one or nearly every one remembers only those words: "Her sins are forgiven, for she loved much." An attentive reading of the text shows that this ordinary interpretation is the opposite of the truth. It is thought that Jesus forgave her sins because she had loved many men, or because she had shown her love for Him with her perfume and her kisses. The parable of the two debtors makes it clear that the meaning of Jesus' words, badly quoted and even more completely misunderstood, is entirely the contrary. The woman had sinned greatly and because of her repentance she was wholly pardoned; and because her pardon was great she greatly loved Him who had saved her, who had forgiven her; the nard and her tears and her kisses were the expression of that grateful love. If before going into the house that evening the sinning woman had not already become transformed by virtue of her pardon, she would not have obtained from Jesus forgiveness for her past life spent in evil, not by using all the perfumes of India and Egypt nor by all the kisses of her lips, nor by all the tears of her eyes. Christ's forgiveness was not the reward for those acts of homage; those acts were her thank-offerings for her forgiveness already received; and they were great because her forgiveness was great, as her forgiveness had been great because great had been her sin.

Jesus would not have repelled the sinning woman even if she had still been a sinner, but if He had not been sure of her conversion He would not perhaps have accepted those tokens of love; from now on even the most rigorous Pharisaical precepts permitted Him to speak with her: "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

Simon could think of no answer; but from the side of the disciples a rough, angry voice was raised, well known to Jesus. It was the voice of Judas: "Why was this waste of the ointment made, why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?" And the other disciples, so the Evangelists say, approved the words of Judas, and murmured against the woman. Judas was the man who held the purse; the basest of them all had chosen the basest element, —money.

Money was pleasing to Judas, pleasing in itself and pleasing in its possibility of power. He spoke of the poor, but he did not think of the poor, to whom Jesus had distributed bread in the country-solitudes, as well as to his own companions, too poor as yet to conquer Jerusalem and to found the empire of the Messiah where Judas hoped to be one of the masters. And he was envious as well as grasping; envious as all misers are. That silent anointing which was the consecration of the King and the Messiah, those honors offered by a beautiful woman to his Leader, made him suffer; the everlasting jealousy of man against man, when a woman is concerned, was mingled with the disappointment of his cupidity.

But Jesus answered the words of Judas as He answered the silence of Simon. He did not affront those who had affronted Him, but he defended the woman at His feet. And Jesus said, "Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

The inexpressible sadness of this prophecy escaped perhaps those who sat about Him. They could not be persuaded that Jesus, in order to overcome, should be overcome: that in order to triumph eternally He must die. But Jesus felt the day drawing near, "But me ye have not always, she is come to anoint my body to the burying." The woman listened in terror to this confirmation of her presentiment and another burst of tears rained down from her eyes. Then with her face hidden in her loosened hair, she went away as silently as she had come.

The disciples were silent, not convinced, but abashed. To hide his chagrin Simon filled the guest's cup with better wine, but in the yellow light of the lamps the silent table seemed a banquet of ghosts among whom had passed the shadow of death.

"WHO AM I?"

And yet the disciples knew. Those words of death were not the first they had heard from Jesus' lips. They should have remembered that day, not long before, when on a solitary road near Cæsarea, Jesus had asked what people said of Him. They should have remembered the answer which flashed out like sudden flame, the impetuous outcry of belief from Peter's heart; and the splendor which had shone on three of them on the summit of the mountain; and the exact prophecies of Christ as to the manner of His death.

They had heard and they had seen, and still they hoped on,—all but one. The truth shone out in them at moments like lightning-flashes in the dark. Then the night fell blacker than ever. The new man in their hearts who recognized Jesus as the Christ, the man born for the second time, the Christian, disappeared to give way to the Jew, deaf and blind, who saw nothing beyond the Jerusalem of bricks and stone.

The question which Jesus had put to the Twelve on the road in Cæsarea must have been the beginning of their complete conversion to the new truth. What need did Jesus have to know what others thought of Him? Such a curiosity springs up only in doubtful souls, in those who do not know themselves, in the weak who cannot read in their own hearts, in the blind who are not sure of the ground on which they stand. For any one of us such a question is legitimate, but not for Jesus. No one of us knows really who he is, no one knows with any certainty what is his real nature, his mission, and the name which he has a right to call his own, the eternal name which fits our destiny. The name which was given to us in infancy, together with the salt and water of baptism, the name set down on the municipal register, and written in the records of birth and of death, the name which the mother calls with so much gentleness in the morning, which the sweetheart murmurs with so much desire at night, the name which is cut for the last time on the rectangle of the tomb, that is not our real name. Every one of us has a secret name which expresses our invisible and authentic essence, and which we ourselves will never know until the day of the New Birth, until the full light of the resurrection.

Few of us dare to ask ourselves, "Who am I?" and there are still fewer who can answer. The question "Who art thou?" is the most tremendous, the most weighty which man can put to man. Other human beings are for each of us a sealed mystery even in the moments of supreme passion, when two souls desperately essay to become one. We are all of us a mystery even to ourselves. Unknown to others, we live among others unknown to us. Much of our wretchedness comes from this universal ignorance. Here is a man who acts like a king and believes himself a king and in the absolute he is really only a poor servant, predestined from the beginning of time to dependent mediocrity. Here is another dressed and acting like a judge; look at him well; he is born a dry-goods dealer, his real place is in the country fair. That man there who writes poetry has not understood his inner voice; he should be a goldsmith, because gold which can be turned into coin suits his taste, and he is attracted by filigree, mosaics, chasing, imitation jewels. This other man who is at the head of an army ought to be teaching school. What an expert and eloquent professor he might have become! And that fellow there, shouting in the public places, heading a revolution, calling on the people to revolt, is a gardener who has mistaken his calling; the red of tomatoes, long lines of onions, garlic, and cabbages would be the fit reward of his true mission. This other man here, on the contrary, who, cursing his fate, prunes his grape-vines and spreads the manure on the cultivated earth, should have studied in law-books the art of quibbling: no one can invent sophisms and verbal tricks as he can, and even now, how much eloquence he pours out in humble duels about money matters, this poor "leading lawyer" exiled to barns and furrows.

These errors concern us because we do not know, because we have not spiritual eyes strong enough to read in the heart which beats inside our own breasts, and the hearts which beat under the flesh of our neighbors, so irrevocably remote from us. Everything is in confusion because of those Names which we do not know, illegible for us, known to genius alone.

THOU ART THE CHRIST

But what did Jesus care what was said of Him by the men of the lake and of the cities, Jesus who could read in their souls the thoughts hidden even to themselves? Long before that day Jesus alone knew with ineffable certainty what His real name was, and what was his superhuman nature. As a matter of fact He did not ask that He might know, but, now that the end was near, that His faithful followers might know, His real name, at last—even they.

"Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias or, one of the Prophets."

What were these things to Him, these rudimentary guesses of the poor and the ignorant? He wished the definite answer to come from His Disciples, destined as they were to follow His work and to bear witness to Him among the peoples and the centuries. Even at the last He did not wish to impose by force a belief on those who had seen His life close at hand and had heard Him speak. The recognition of His superb human mission, that name which not one of them up to that time had pronounced (as if they were afraid of it, as if it were too dangerous a secret to speak aloud), that recognition on the part of the Twelve should be free and spontaneous, should burst out, an impetuous confession of love, from one of those souls, should be pronounced by one of those mouths.

"But whom say ye that I am?" And then there came to Simon Peter the great light that was almost too great for him, and made him First to all eternity. He could not keep back the words, they came to his lips almost involuntarily in a cry of which he himself the moment before would have believed himself incapable: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Thou hast the word of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

At last from Peter the Rock there sprang forth the well-spring which from that day to this has quenched the thirst of sixty generations of men. It was his right and his reward. Peter had been the first to follow Christ in the divine wanderings: it was for him to be the first to recognize in the wanderer the Proclaimer of the Kingdom, the everlasting and lawful sovereign of that Kingdom, the Messiah whom all men had been awaiting in the desert of the centuries, who had finally come and was there Himself, clothed in flesh, standing before their eyes, with His feet in the dust of the road.

The pure King, the Son of Justice, the Prince of Peace, the Son of Man sent by God, the Saviour, the Anointed, whom the prophets had foretold in the twilight of sorrow and affliction; who had been seen by apocalyptic writers descending upon the earth like lightning, in the fullness of victory and glory; for whom the poor, the wounded, the hungry, the afflicted, had been waiting from century to century, as dry grass waits for rain, as the flower waits for the sun, as the mouth awaits the kiss, and the heart, consolation; the Son of God and of Man, the Man who hid God in human flesh, the God who cloaked His divinity in Adam's clay, it is He, the dear Brother of every day, who looks quietly into the astounded eyes of those chosen ones!

The period of waiting is done; ended is the vigil! Why had they not recognized Him until that day? Whence did it come in those simple souls, the first notion of the true name of Him who so many times had taken them by the hand, and had spoken for their ears to hear? They could never think that one of them—a common man like them, a workman and poor as they were—could be the Saviour Messiah announced and awaited by saints and by the centuries. With the intellect alone they could never have discovered Him, nor with the mere bodily senses, nor with the teachings of the scriptures; only with the inspiration, the intuition, the sudden flaming illumination of the heart, as it happened that day in the soul of Peter. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven." Fleshly eyes would not have been able to see what they saw without a revelation from on high.

But weighty consequences flow from the choice of Peter for this proclamation. It is a reward which calls for other recompense, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven."

Weighty words from which have emerged, through the patient germination of long centuries, helped by the fire of faith and by the blood of witnesses, one of the greatest Kingdoms which men have ever established upon the earth; the only one of the old kingdoms which still lives on in the same city which saw the rise and fall of the proudest and most pompous of earthly kingdoms. For these words many men suffered, many were tortured, many were killed. To deny or uphold, to interpret or cancel these words, thousands of men have been killed in city squares and in battles; kingdoms have been divided, societies have been shaken and rent, nations have waged war, emperors and beggars have given their all. But their meaning in Christ's mouth is plain and simple. He means to say, "Thou, Peter, shalt be hard and staunch as a rock, and upon the staunchness of thy faith in me, which thou wast the first to profess, is founded the first Christian society, the humble seed of the Kingdom. Against this Church which to-day has only Twelve citizens but which will be spread to the limits of the earth, the forces of evil cannot prevail, because you are the Spirit and the Spirit cannot be overcome and dimmed by Matter. Thou shalt close forever—and when I speak to thee I am speaking to all those who shall succeed thee united in the same certainty—the Gates of Hell; and thou shalt open to all those who are chosen the Gates of Heaven. Thou shalt bind and thou shalt unloosen in my name. What thou shalt forbid after my death shall be forbidden to-morrow also for that new humanity which I will find on my return; what thou shalt command shalt be justly commanded because thou wilt be only repeating in other words what I have told and taught thee. Thou shalt be, in thy person and in that of thy legitimate heirs, the shepherd of the interregnum, the temporary and provisional guide who shalt prepare, together with comrades obedient to thee, the Kingdom of God and of Love.

"In requital for this revelation and for this promise I lay on you a hard command: to keep silence; for the present you must tell no one who I am. My day is near, but has not yet come; you will be witness to events which you do not expect, which will even be the contrary of what you expect. I know the hour in which I shall speak and in which you shall speak. And when we break our silence, my cry and your cry shall be heard in the most distant realms of Heaven and Earth."

SUN AND SNOW

A man's voice, the voice of Peter the Rock, had called Him the Son of Man; another voice issuing from a cloud was to call Him the Son of God.

Very high is the three-peaked mountain of Hermon, covered with snow even in the hot season, the highest mountain of Palestine, higher than Mount Tabor. The Psalmist says, "It is the dew of Hermon that descends upon the mountains of

Zion." Jesus became incarnate light on this mountain, the highest mountain in the life of Christ, that life which marks its different stages by great heights—the mountain of the Temptation, the mountain of the Beatitudes, the mountain of the Transfiguration, the mountain of the Crucifixion.

Three Disciples alone were with Him: he who was called Peter, and the Sons of Thunder,—the man with the rugged, mountainous character, and the stormy men—fitting company for the place and hour. He prayed alone, apart from them, higher than all of them, perhaps kneeling in the snow. All of us have seen in winter how the snow on a mountain makes any other whiteness seem dull and drab. A pale face seems strangely dark, white linen seems dingy, paper looks like dry clay. The contrary of all this was seen on that day up in the gleaming, deserted height alone in the sky.

Jesus prayed by Himself apart from the others. Suddenly His face shone like the sun and His raiment became as white as snow in the sunshine, white "as no fuller on earth can white them." Over the whiteness of the snow a more brilliant whiteness, a splendor more powerful than all known splendors, outshone all earthly light.

The Transfiguration is the Feast and the Victory of Light. Jesus still in the flesh—for so short a time!—took on the most subtle, the lightest and most spiritual aspect of matter. His body awaiting its liberation became sunlight, the light of Heaven, intellectual and supernatural light; His soul transfigured in prayer shone out through the flesh, pierced with its flaming whiteness the screen of His body and His garments, like a flame consuming the walls which close it in, and flashing through them.

But the light was not the same on His face and on His raiment. The light of His face was like the sun; that of His garments was like the brilliance of snow. His face, mirror of the soul, took on the color of fire; His garments, mere material stuff, were white like ice. For the soul is sun, fire, love; but the garments, all garments,—even that heavy garment which is called the human body,—are opaque, cold, dead; and can shine only by reflected light.

But Jesus, all light, His face gleaming with quiet refulgence, His garments shining white—gold sparkling in the midst of silver—was not alone. Two great figures, returned from death, gleaming like Him, stood by Him, and spoke with Him, Moses and Elias. The first of the Prophets, men of light and fire, came to bear witness to the new Light which shines on Hermon. All those who have spoken with God remain radiant with light. The face of Moses when he came down from Mt. Sinai had become so resplendent that he covered it with a veil, lest he dazzle the others. And Elias was caught up to Heaven in a chariot of fire drawn by fiery steeds. John, the new Elias, announced the baptism of fire, but his face was darkened by the sun and did not shine like the sun. The only splendor which came into his life was the golden platter on which his bloody head was carried, a kingly gift to Herod's sinister concubine. But on Hermon there was One whose face shone more than Moses' and whose ascension was to be more splendid than that of Elias,—He whom Moses had promised and who was to come after Elias. They had come there beside him, but they were to disappear thereafter forever. They were no longer necessary after this last revelation. From now on the world can do without their laws and their hopes. A luminous cloud hid the glorious three from the eyes of the obscure three, and from the cloud came out a voice: "This is my beloved Son: hear him."

The cloud did not hide the light, but increased it. As from the tempest-cloud, the lightning darts out to light up suddenly all the country; from this cloud already shining in itself, flamed out the fire which burned up the Old Covenant and confirmed to all eternity the New Promise. The column of smoke which guided the fleeing Hebrews in the desert towards Jordan, the black cloud which hid the ark in the day of desolation and fear, had finally become a cloud of light so brilliant that it hid even the sunlike splendor of the face which was soon to be buffeted in the dark days, close at hand.

But when the cloud disappeared, Jesus was once more alone. The two precursors and the two witnesses had disappeared. His face had taken on its natural color. His garments had their everyday aspect. Christ, once more a loving brother, turned back to his swooning companions. "Arise, and be not afraid. . . . Tell the vision to no man, until the son of man be risen again from the dead."

The Transfiguration forecasts the Ascension; but to die in shame always precedes rising in glory.

I SHALL SUFFER MANY THINGS

Jesus had known that He must soon die a shameful death. It was the reward for which he was waiting and no one could have defrauded Him of it. He who saves others is ready to lose himself; he who rescues others necessarily pays with his person (that is, with the only value which is really his and which surpasses and includes all other values); it is fitting that he who loves his enemies should be hated even by his friends; he who brings salvation to all nations must needs be killed by his own people; it suits human ideas of the fitness of things that he who offers his life should be put to death. Every benefaction is such an offense to the native ingratitude of men that it can be paid for only by the heaviest penalty. We lend ears only to voices which cry out from the tombs, and reserve our scanty capacity for reverence for those whom we have assassinated. The only truths which remain in the fleeting memory of the human race are the truths written in blood.

Jesus knew what was awaiting Him at Jerusalem, and as later was said by one worthy to portray Him, His every thought was colored by the thought of death. Three times they had already tried to kill Him; the first time at Nazareth when they took Him up on the summit of the mountain where the city was built and wished to cast Him down; the second time in the Temple, the Jews, offended by His talk, laid their hands on stones to stone Him; and a third time at the feast of the Dedication in winter-time, they took up the stones of the street to silence Him. But for these three times he escaped because His hour was not yet come.

He kept His certainty of death in His own heart for Himself alone until His last hours. For He did not wish to sadden His

Disciples who would have shrunk from following a condemned man, a man who in His own heart knew Himself at the point of death. But after the triple consecration as Messiah—Peter's cry, the light of Hermon, the anointing of Bethany—He could no longer keep silence. He knew too well the ingenuous complacency of the Twelve. He knew that when the rare moments of enthusiasm and illumination were gone, their thoughts were often the common thoughts of common people, human even in their highest dreams. He knew that the Messiah for whom they were waiting was a victorious restorer of the Age of Gold and not the Man of Sorrows. They thought of Him as a king on his throne and not as a criminal on the gallows; triumphant, receiving homage and tribute, not spat upon, beaten, and insulted; come to raise the dead and not to be executed like an assassin.

Lest the Disciples should lose this new certainty of Christ's Messiahship on the day of His ignominy, Christ knew that He must warn them. They must learn from His own mouth that the Messiah would be condemned, that the Victorious One would disappear in a dreadful downfall, that the King of all kings would be insulted by Cæsar's servants, that the Son of God would be crucified by the ignorant, blind servants of God.

Three times they had tried to put Him to death; three times after Peter's recognition He announced to the Twelve His imminent death. And there were to be three kinds of men who were to bring about His death: the Elders, the High Priests and the Scribes. The Elders were the Patricians, the aristocrats, the lay delegates of the Hebrew middle-classes, they represented authority and wealth, and Christ had come to transform authority into service and to condemn the rich and their treasures. The High Priests represented the Temple, and He had come to destroy the Temple. The Scribes were the doctors of law, of theology, the interpreters of the Book, the masters of the Scriptures, and represented the authority of word and of tradition; and He had come to transform the Word and to regenerate the tradition. These three orders of men never could forgive Him even after they had sent Him to Golgotha.

And there were to be three accomplices to His death: Judas who betrayed Him, Caiaphas who sentenced Him, Pilate who permitted the execution of the sentence. And there were to be three sorts of men to execute the penalty: the guards who arrested Him, the Hebrews who cried "Crucify Him!" before the procurator's house, the Roman soldiers who nailed Him on the cross.

There were to be three degrees of His afflictions, as He Himself told the disciples. First He was to be spurned and outraged, then spit upon and beaten, and finally killed. But they were not to fear nor to weep. As life has its reward in death, death is the promise of a second life. After three days, He was to rise from the tomb, never more to die. Christ was to be victorious not over earthly kingdoms, but over death. He does not bring golden treasures, nor abundance of grain, but immortality to all those who obey Him, and the cancelation of all sins committed by men. He was to buy this immortality and this liberation by imprisonment and death. The price was hard and bitter, but without those few days of His Passion and burial He could not have secured centuries and centuries of life and freedom for men.

The Disciples were troubled at this revelation and unwilling to believe. But Jesus had already begun His Passion, foreseeing those terrible last days of His life and describing them. From now on the heirs of His work knew all, and He could go on His way towards Jerusalem in order that His words should be fulfilled to the very last.

MARANATHA

And yet for one day at least He was to be like that King awaited by the poor every morning on the thresholds of the holy city.

Easter draws near. It was the beginning of the last week which even now had not yet ended—since the new Sabbath has not yet dawned. But this time Jesus does not come to Jerusalem as in other years, an obscure wanderer mingled with the crowd of pilgrims, into the evil-smelling metropolis huddled with its houses, white as sepulchers, under the towering vainglory of the Temple destined to the flames. This time, which is the last time, Jesus is accompanied by His faithful friends, by His fellow-peasants, by the women who were later to weep, by the Twelve who were to hide themselves, by the Galileans who come in memory of an ancient miracle, but with the hope of seeing a new miracle. This time He is not alone; the vanguard of the Kingdom is with Him, and He does not come unknown: the cry of the Resurrection has preceded Him. Even in the capital ruled by the iron of the Romans, the gold of the merchants, the letter of the Pharisees, there are eyes which look towards the Mount of Olives and hearts which beat faster.

This time He does not come on foot into the city which should have been the throne of His kingdom, and which was to be His tomb. When He had come to Bethpage, He sent two disciples to look for an ass, "Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her; loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them."

Even up to our days it has been said that Jesus wished to ride on an ass as a sign of humble meekness, as if He wished to signify symbolically that He approached His people as the Prince of Peace. It has been forgotten that in the robust early periods of history asses were not the submissive beasts of burden of to-day, weary bones in flogged and ill-treated skin, brought low by many centuries of slavery, used only to carry baskets and bags over the stones of steep hills. The ass of antiquity was a fiery and warlike animal; handsome and bold as a horse, fit to be sacrificed to divinities. Homer, master of metaphors, intended no belittling of Ajax the robust, the proud Ajax, when he likened him to an ass. The Jews moreover used untamed asses for other comparisons: Zophar the Naamithite said to Job, "For vain man would be wise though man be born like a wild ass' colt." And Daniel tells how Nebuchadnezzar, as expiation of his tyrannies, was driven from the sons of men, and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses.

Jesus asked expressly for an ass not yet broken, never before ridden, something like a wild ass, because on that day, the animal chosen by Him was not a symbol of the humility of his rider but was a symbol of the Jewish people, who were to be liberated and overcome by Christ; the animal, unruly and restive, stiff-necked, whom no prophet and no monarch had mastered and who to-day was tied to a post as Israel was tied with the Roman rope; vain and foolhardy as in the Book of Job; fitting companion for an evil king; slave to foreigners, but at the same time rebellious to the end of time, the Hebrew people had finally found its master. For one day only: it revolted against Him, its legitimate master in that same week; but its revolt succeeded only for a short time. The quarrelsome capitol was pulled down and the god-killing crowd dispersed like the husks of the eternal Winnower over all the face of the earth.

The ass's back is hard, and Christ's friends throw their cloaks over it. Stony is the slope which leads from the Mount of Olives and the triumphant crowds throw their mantles over the rough stones. This, too, is symbolical of self-consecration. To take off your mantle is the beginning of stripping yourself, the beginning of that bareness which is the desire for confession and the death of false shame; bareness of the body, promising naked truth for the soul. The loving charity of supreme alms-giving; to give what we have on our backs, "If any man . . . shall take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also."

Then began the descent in the heat of the sun and of glory; in the midst of freshly cut branches and of songs of hope. It was at the beginning of breezy April and of the spring. The golden hour of noon lay about the city with its green vineyards, fields and orchards. The sky, immense, deep blue, miraculously calm, clear and joyful as the promise of divine eyes, stretched away into the infinite. The stars could not be seen, yet the light of our sun seemed augmented by the quiet brilliance of those other distant suns. A warm breeze, still scented with the freshness of heaven, gently swayed the tender tree-tops and set the young, growing leaves a-flutter. It was one of those days when blue seems bluer, green seems greener, light more brilliant and love more loving.

Those who accompanied Christ in that descent felt themselves swept away by the rapture of the world and of the moment. Never before that day had they felt themselves so bursting with hope and adoration. The cry of Peter became the cry of the fervent little army winding its way down the slope towards the queen-city. "Hosanna to the Son of David!" said the voices of the young men and of the women, in the midst of this impetuous exultation. Even the Disciples almost began to hope, although they had been warned that this would be the last sun, although they knew that they were accompanying a man about to die.

The procession approached the mysterious, hostile city with the roaring tumult of a torrent that has burst its banks. These countrymen, these people from the provinces, came forward flanked as by a moving forest, as if they had wished to carry a little country freshness inside the noisome walls, into the drab alleyways. The boldest had cut palm branches along the road, boughs of myrtle, clusters of olives, willow leaves, and they waved them on high, shouting out the impassioned words of the Psalmist towards the shining face of Him who came in the name of God.

Now the first Christian legion had arrived before the gates of Jerusalem and the voices did not still their homage: "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest!" Their shouting reached the ears of the Pharisees, who arrived, haughty and severe, to investigate the seditious noise. The cries scandalized those learned ears and troubled those suspicious hearts, and some of them, well wrapped up in their doctoral cloaks, called from among the crowd to Jesus: "Master, rebuke thy disciples." And then He, without halting, "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out!"

The silent, motionless stones which, according to St. John, God could have transformed into sons of Abraham; the hot stones of the desert which Jesus was not willing to change into loaves of bread at the challenge of the Adversary; the hostile stones of the street which twice had been picked up to stone Him; the hard stones of Jerusalem would have been less hard, less icy, less insensitive than the souls of the Pharisees.

But with this answer, Jesus had asserted His right to be called "the Christ." It was a declaration of war. At the very moment of His entrance into His city, the New King gave the signal for the attack.

THE DEN OF THIEVES

He went up to the Temple where all His enemies were assembled. On the hill-top the sacred fortress sunned its new whiteness in the magnificence of the day. The old Ark of the nomads, drawn by oxen through sweltering deserts and over battlefields, had halted on that height, petrified as a defense for the royal city. The moveable cart of the fugitives had become a heavy citadel of stone and marble, a pompous stronghold of palaces and stairways, shady with colonnades, lighted with courts, enclosed by walls, sheer above the valley, protected by bastions and by towers, a fortress rather than a place of worship. It was not only the precinct of the Holy of Holies, and the sacrificial altar, it was no longer only the Temple, the mystic sanctuary of the people. With its great old towers, its guardrooms, its warehouses for offerings, its strong-boxes for deposits, its open piazzas for trade and covered galleries for meetings and amusement, it was anything rather than a sanctuary for meditation and prayer. It was everything, a fortress in case of assault, a bank-vault, a market-place in time of pilgrimage and feast-days, a bazar on all days, a forum for the disputes of politicians, the wranglings of doctors and the gossip of idlers; a thoroughfare, a rendezvous, a business center. Built by a faithless King to win over the favor of a captious and seditious people, to satisfy the pride and avarice of the priestly caste, an instrument of war and a market-place for trade, it must have seemed to the eyes of Jesus the natural focus for all the enemies of His truth.

Jesus goes up to the Temple to destroy the Temple. He will leave to the Romans of Titus the task of literally dismantling the walls, of scattering the masses of stone, of burning down the buildings, of stealing the bronze and gold, of reducing to a smoky and accursed ruin the great stronghold of Herod; but He will destroy the values which the proud Temple upheld with its piled-up blocks of ordered stone, its paved terraces and its golden doors. Jesus goes up towards the Temple: the Man transfigured on the mountain is set against the scribes parched and withered among their scrolls; the Messiah of the New Kingdom against the usurper of the kingdom defiled by compromises, corrupt with infamy; the Gospel against the Torah; the future against the past; the fire of love against the ashes of the Letter. The day of battle is at hand. Jesus, among the songs of His fervent band, goes up to the sumptuous lair of His enemies. Well does He know the street. How many times He had gone over it as a little child led along by the hand in the crowd of pilgrims, in the midst of noise and dust, in the band of Galileans! Later as an unknown boy, confused by the dust and heat of the sun, tired and bewildered, He used to look toward the walls desperately longing to arrive at the summit, hoping to find up there in the sacred precincts a little shade for His eyes, cool water for His mouth, a word of consolation for His heart.

But to-day everything is transformed. He is not led along. He leads along. He does not come to adore, but to punish. He knows that there inside, behind the beautiful façades of the sublime sepulcher, there are only ashes and corruption: His enemies selling ashes and feeding themselves on corruption. The first adversary who comes before Him is the demon of greed.

He enters into the Court of the Gentiles, the most spacious and most densely crowded of all. The great, sunny, well-paved terrace is not the atrium of a sanctuary, but a dirty market-place. An immense, roaring din rises up from the vermin-like crowd of bankers, of buyers and sellers, of money-changers who give and take money. There are herdsmen with their oxen and their flocks of sheep; venders of pigeons and turtle doves, standing by the long lines of their coops; bird-sellers, with cages of chirping sparrows; benches for money-changers, with bowls overflowing with copper and silver. Merchants, their feet in the fresh-dropped dung, handle the flanks of the animals destined for sacrifice; or call with monotonous iteration women who have come there after child-birth, pilgrims who have come to offer a rich sacrifice, lepers who offer living birds for their cure, obtained or hoped for. Money-changers, with a coin hung at their ears as a mark of their trade, gloatingly plunge their greedy talons into gleaming piles; the go-betweens run about in the swarm of the gossiping groups; niggardly, wary provincials hold excited conferences before loosening the purse strings to change their cash for a votive offering, and from time to time a restless ox drowns out with his deep bellow the thin bleating of the lambs, the thrill voices of the women, the clinking of drachma and shekels.

Christ was familiar with the spectacle. He knew that the house of God had been turned into the house of Mammon, and that, instead of silently invoking the Spirit, material-minded men trafficked there in the filth of the Demon, with the priests as their accomplices. But this time He did not restrain His scorn and His repugnance. To destroy the Temple, He commenced with the destruction of the market-place. The Eternal Mendicant, the poor man, accompanied by his poor friends, flung Himself against the servitors of money. He had in His hand a length of rope, which He knotted together like a whip, and with it He opened a passage-way through the astonished people. The benches of the money-changers crashed down at the first shock. The coins were scattered on the ground amid yells of astonishment and wrath; the seats of the bird-sellers were overturned beside their scattered pigeons. The herdsmen began to urge towards the doors the oxen and the sheep. The sparrow-sellers took their cages under their arms and disappeared. Cries rose to Heaven, some scandalized, some approving; from the other court-yards other people came running towards the disturbance. Jesus, surrounded by the boldest of His friends, was brandishing His whip on high, and driving the money-changers towards the door. And He repeated in a loud voice, "My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves!"

And the last money-handlers disappeared from the courts like rubbish scattered by the wind.

BUSINESS THE GOD

This action of Jesus was not only the righteous purification of the sanctuary, but also the public manifestation of His detestation for Mammon and the servants of Mammon. Business, that modern god, was for Him a form of theft. A marketplace was therefore a cave of obsequious brigands, of tolerated thieves. Among all the elements of the legalized theft which is called commerce, none is more detestable and shameful than the use of money. If some one gives you a sheep in exchange for money, you can be sure that he has made you pay more money than the sheep really cost, but at least he gives you something which is not a hateful mineral symbol of wealth. He gives you a living being, which will furnish you wool in the spring time, which will bear you a lamb, and which you can eat if you like. But the exchange of money for money, of coined metal for coined metal, is something unnatural, paradoxical and demoniac. Everything that is known of banks, rates of exchange, discount and usury, is a shameful and repellent mystery which has always been the terror of simple souls, that is, of upright and deep souls. The peasant who sows his grain, the tailor who makes a garment, the weaver who weaves wool or linen, have up to a certain limit a real right that their wealth should increase, because they have added something which before was not in the world, in cloth, in wool. But that a mountain of money should bring forth other money without labor or effort, without production by man of any object to be seen, to be consumed, to be enjoyed, is a scandal which goes beyond, and confounds human imagination.

Money-changers, bankers, amassers of silver and gold, are slaves of the witchcraft of the Demon more than all others. And it is to those men, the men of banks and of finance, that the grateful Demon gives power on this earth: they are the ones even to-day who rule nations, instigate wars, who starve nations, and who, by an infernal system of their own, suck out the life of the poor, transformed into gold, dripping with sweat and blood.

Christ, who pitied the rich, but who hated and detested wealth, the great wall which cuts off from men the vision of the Kingdom of Heaven, had broken up the den of thives and had purified the Temple where He was to teach the last truths which remained to Him to expound. But with that violent action, He had antagonized all the commercial middle-class of Jerusalem. The men He had driven away demanded that their patrons should punish the man who was ruining business on the Holy Hill. These men of money found ready hearing with the men of Law, already embittered for other reasons, so much the more because Jesus in disturbing the business of the Temple had condemned and harmed the priests themselves. The most successful bazars were the property of the sons of Annas, that is, close relations of the High-Priest Caiaphas. All the doves which were sold in the Court of the Gentiles were raised on the property of Annas, and the priests who did business in them made a good income every month out of turtle-doves alone. The money-changers, who should not have been allowed to stay in the Temple, paid the great Sadducee families of the priestly aristocracy a goodly tithe on the thousands of shekels brought in every year by the exchange of foreign money into Hebrew money. Had not the Temple itself perhaps become a great national bank with coffers and strong boxes in treasure chambers?

Jesus had wounded the twenty thousand priests of Jerusalem in their prestige and in their purses. He had overturned the values of the falsified and mutilated Letter, in the name of which they commanded and on which they fattened. More than this, He had driven out their associates, the traffickers and bankers. If He had His way, it would ruin them all. But the two threatened castes drew together still more closely, to make way with the dangerous intruder. It was perhaps that very evening that priests and merchants agreed on the purchase of a betrayer and a cross. The bourgeoisie were to give the small amount of money necessary; the clergy to find the religious pretext; the foreign government, naturally desiring to be on good terms with clergy and bourgeoisie, would lend its soldiers.

But Jesus, having left the Temple, went His way towards Bethany, passing by the Mount of Olives.

THE VIPERS OF THE TOMBS

The next morning when he went back, the herdsmen and merchants had squatted down outside, near the doors, but the courts were humming with crowds of excited people.

The sentence pronounced and executed by Jesus against the honest thieves had set gossiping Jerusalem all agog. Those blows of the whip, like so many stones thrown into the Jerusalem frog-pond, had awakened the poor to joyous hope and had set the lords quaking with fear.

And early in the morning, all had gone up there from the dark alleys and from the fine houses, from the work-shops and from the public squares, leaving all their affairs, with the restless anxiety of those who hope for miracles, or revenge. The day-laborers had come, the weavers, the dyers, the cobblers, the woodworkers, all those who detested the swindlers, the stranglers, the shearers of poverty, traders who enriched themselves at the expense of indigence. Among the first had come the lamentable scum of the city, the dirty vermin-ridden prisoners of eternal beggary, with leprous scabs, with their sores uncared for, with their bones protruding through the skin to testify to their hunger. There had also come pilgrims from outside, those of Galilee, who had accompanied Jesus in His festal entrance; and with them Jews from the Syrian and Egyptian colonies, dressed in their best, like distant relatives who reappear every once in so often at the family home for a family festival.

But there came up also, in groups of four or five, the Scribes and Pharisees. They were fraternal colleagues, fitting companions for each other. The Scribes were the Doctors of the Law; the Pharisees were the Puritans of the Law. Nearly all the Scribes were Pharisees, many Pharisees were Scribes. Imagine a professor adding religious pedantry to his doctoral pedantry; or a religious hypocrite provided also with the grave face of a casuistical pedagogue, and you will have the modern equivalent of a Pharisaical Scribe, or of a Pharisee who was also a Scribe. A Tartuffe with academic honors; an Academician, who is at the same time a religious hypocrite; a philosophizing Quaker, are other modern equivalents.

These men therefore went up that morning to the Temple with much show of pride without and many evil intentions within. They came up proudly wrapped in their long cloaks, with their fringes fluttering, their chests thrown out, their eyes clouded, their eyebrows raised, with sneering mouths and quivering nostrils, with a step which announced their importance and the indignation felt by them, God's privileged sheriffs.

Jesus, in the midst of all these eyes turned on Him, waited for those men. It was not the first time that they had come about Him. How many discussions between Him and the provincial Pharisees had taken place here and there in the country! They were Pharisees who had demanded a sign from Heaven, a supernatural proof that He was the Messiah—because the Pharisees, unlike the skeptical Sadducees, sunk in legalized Epicureanism, believed in the imminent arrival of the Saviour.

But the Pharisees expected to see this Saviour as a Jew, strictly observing all laws as they did, and they held that to be worthy to receive Him it was enough to be clean on the outside and to avoid any transgression of any of the trivial rules of Leviticus. The Messiah, the son of David, would not deign to save those who had not avoided all contact, even remote, with foreigners and with heathens, who had not observed the smallest detail of legal purification, who had not paid all the tithes of the Temple, who did not respect at any cost the sanctity of the Sabbath day. In their eyes Jesus could not possibly be the Divine Redeemer. No spectacular and magic signs had been seen: He had contented Himself with healing the sick, with talking about love, and with loving. They had seen Him dining with publicans and sinners, and, worse than everything else, had heard with horror that His disciples did not always wash their hands before sitting down to the table. But the greatest horror, the unendurable scandal, had been His lack of respect for the Sabbath. Jesus had not hesitated to cure the sick, even on the Sabbath, and He held it no crime on that day to do good to His unfortunate brothers. He even shamelessly gloried in this, claiming blasphemously that the Sabbath was made for man, rather than man for the Sabbath.

In the minds of the Pharisees there was only one doubt about Jesus: was He a fool or an impostor? To put the matter to the test, they had tried many times to trap Him by theological tricks, or in dialectical subtleties, but to no avail. As long as He went about in the provinces drawing after Him a few dozen peasants, they had let Him alone, sure that some day or other the last beggar, disillusioned, would leave Him. But now the affair was becoming serious. Accompanied by a band of excitable countrymen, He had gone so far as to enter into the Temple as though it belonged to Him, and had seduced some ignorant unfortunates to call Him the Messiah. More than that, usurping the place of the priests, and almost giving Himself the airs of a king, He had roughly driven out the honest merchants, pious people who admired the Pharisees, even if they did not entirely imitate them. Up to that time the Pharisees had been too easy-going and merciful towards Him. But from now on the unequaled goodness of heart of those extremely mild and tolerant professors would be dangerous and inopportune. The intolerable scandal, the reiterated profanation, the public challenge, called for condemnation and punishment. The false Christ must be disposed of and at once. Scribes and Pharisees went up on the hill to see if He had had the impertinence to go back to the place contaminated by His boasting.

Jesus was waiting for just those men. He wanted to say to them publicly, with the open sky as witness, what He thought of them, what God thought of them, the definite truth about them. The day before, with His whip, He had condemned the animal-sellers and money-changers. Now He was dealing with the merchants of the Word, with the usurers of the Law, with the swindlers of Truth. The condemnation of that day did not exterminate them: with every generation such men spring up again, innumerable, with new names; but their faces are stamped forever with this condemnation wherever they are born and command.

THE DESCENDANTS OF CAIN

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" Their sins could be reduced to one, but that is the most poisonous, the least pardonable of all sins: the sin against the Spirit, the sin against Truth, the betrayal of Truth and Spirit, the laying waste of the only pure wealth which the world possesses. Thieves steal perishable goods, assassins kill the corruptible body, prostitutes sully flesh destined to corruption; but the hypocrites, the Pharisees sully the Word of the absolute, steal the promises of eternity, assassinate the soul. Everything in them is pretense: their dress and their talk, their teaching and their practice. What they say is contradicted by what they do. Their inner life does not correspond to what they choose to show. Secret swinishness gives the lie to their every claim. They are hypocrites because they cover themselves with fringed mantles and with wide phylacteries, to be seen in public places, and love to be called "Master," and all the time they have hidden the keys of knowledge and have shut the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven, and neither go in themselves nor suffer others to enter. Hypocrites because they make long prayers in public and devour the houses of widows, and take advantage of the weak and the desolate. Hypocrites because they wash and clean the outside of the platter and the cup, and inside they are full of rapine and extortion. Hypocrites because they give their attention to minutiæ of rites and purifications and have no care for greater things: they strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. Hypocrites because they observe the smallest commandments and do not obey the only one which is of value: they pay punctually the tithe of mint and anise and cummin and rue, but they have not justice, mercy and faith in their hearts. Hypocrites because they build monuments to the prophets and garnish the sepulchers of righteous men of old times, but persecute the righteous men of to-day, and are preparing to kill the prophets. "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold I sent unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple, and the altar."

They have accepted the inheritance of Cain. They are the descendants of Cain. They kill brothers, execute saints, crucify prophets. And, like Cain, God has stamped upon their faces a Sign—the mysterious sign of immortality. They cannot be killed because theirs are the hands which must kill. The fugitive fratricide was saved by this sign among early men, and the murderous Pharisees will be saved through all the centuries because God needs them for the high works of His justice which seems foolishness and madness to the eyes of little-minded men. An eternal decree, not revealed to most men, decrees death and the most atrocious death to all who would be like God. But the simple man could never assassinate a saint, nor even a sinner, a miraculous chrysalis of potential sanctity. And the saint would no longer be a saint if he took the life of another saint, the only brother given him by the Father. So the indestructible race of the Pharisees was created for all centuries and for all peoples, men who are never simple like children and who never know the way of salvation, those who are not visibly sinners, but who are from head to foot the incarnation of the ugliest sin, those who wish to appear saints and who hate real saints. God has made them fitting instruments of an appalling and necessary massacre, to play the part of executioners of perfect men. Faithful to this command, invulnerable as inhabitants of Hell, marked like Cain, immortal as hypocrisy and cruelty, they have survived all the empires and all the overthrows of empire. With different faces, with different garments, with different rules and pretexts, they have covered the face of the earth, stubborn and prolific, up to the present day. And when they have not been able to kill with nails and with fire, with axes and with knives, they have used tongue and pen with the utmost success.

Jesus, while He spoke to them in the great open courtyard crowded with witnesses, knew that He spoke to His Judges, and to those who would be, through intermediate persons, the real authors of His death. By speaking out on this day, He justified His later silence before Caiaphas and Pilate. He had condemned them and they would condemn Him; He had judged them first and had nothing more to add when they wished to judge Him.

Images of death came to His lips as He described them to themselves: vipers and tombs, treacherous black vipers, which as soon as you approach them pour into your blood all the poison hidden in their fangs. Whited sepulchers, fair without but within full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

The Pharisees who stood before Jesus, and all those who have legitimately descended from them, are glad to hide themselves in the shadow of the dead, to prepare their venom. Cold as a snake's skin, as the stone of a tomb, neither the heat of the sun, nor the warmth of love, nor the fires of Hell can ever warm them. They know all the words save one, the word of Life.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them." The only one aware of this was Jesus—and it was because of this that He was not to remain more than two days in the sepulcher which they were preparing for Him.

ONE STONE UPON ANOTHER

The Thirteen went down from the Temple to make their daily ascent to the Mount of Olives. One of the Disciples (who could it have been?—perhaps John, son of Salome, still rather childish and naïvely full of wonder at what he saw? Or Judas Iscariot, with his respect for wealth?) said to Jesus, "Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!"

The Master turned to look at the high walls faced with marble which the ostentatious calculation of Herod had built up on the hill and said, "Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

The admiring exclamation suddenly died. No one dared answer, but perplexed and surprised, each of them continued to turn over in his mind these words. Hard words for the ears of those carnal-minded Jews, for the narrow hearts of those ambitious provincials. He whom they loved had said in these last days many other hard words, hard to hear, hard to understand, hard to believe. But they did not remember any other words so hard as these. They knew that He was the Christ and that He was to suffer and die, but they hoped that He would rise again at once in the glorious victory of the new David, to give abundance to all Israel and to award the greatest prizes and power to them, faithful to Him in the dangerous wanderings of His poor days. But if the world was to be commanded by Judea, Judea was to be commanded by Jerusalem, and the seats of command were to be in the Temple of the great King. It was occupied to-day by the faithless Sadducees, the hypocritical Pharisees, the traitorous Scribes, but Christ was to drive them away to give their places to His apostles. How then could the Temple be destroyed, splendid memorial of the kingdom in the past; hoped-for rock of the new Kingdom?

This talk of stones was harder than a stone for Simon called the Rock and for his companions. Had not John the Baptist said that God could change the stones of the Jordan into sons of Abraham? Had not Satan said that the Son of God could change the stones of the desert to loaves of wheat bread? Had not Jesus Himself said while He was passing the walls of Jerusalem that those very stones, in place of men, would have shouted out greetings and sung hymns? And was it not He who had made the stones fall from the hands of His enemies, the stones which they had taken up to kill Him? And had He not made them fall from those who accused the adulteress?

But the Disciples could not understand this talk about the stones of the Temple. They could not and they would not understand that those great massive stones, quarried out patiently from the mountains, drawn from afar by oxen, squared and prepared by chisels and mallets, put one upon another by masters of the art to make the most marvelous Temple of the universe; that these stones, warm and brilliant in the sun, should be torn apart once more and pulverized into ruins.

They had scarcely arrived at the Mount of Olives, and Christ had only had time to sit down opposite to the Temple, when their curiosity burst out:

"Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?"

The answer was the discourse on the Last Things, the second Sermon on the Mount. At the beginning of His work, He had explained how the soul must be transformed to found the Kingdom; now at death's door He taught what the punishment of the stubborn would be and in what manner He would come again.

This discourse, less understood than the other, and even more forgotten, is not, as it is generally believed, the answer to one question only. The Disciples had put two questions, "When shall these things be?" That is, the ruin of the Temple; and "What shall be the signs of Thy coming?" There are two answers to these two questions. Jesus first describes the events which will precede the destruction of Jerusalem, and then He describes the signs of His second appearance. The prophetic discourse, although it is read all in one piece in the Gospels, had two parts. The prophecies are two, quite distinct from each other; the first was fulfilled before the end of Jesus' generation, about forty years after His death. The second has not yet been fulfilled, but perhaps before the passing of our own generation the first signs will be seen.

SHEEP AND GOATS

Jesus knew the weakness of the Disciples, weakness of the spirit, and perhaps also of the flesh, and He puts them on their guard against two great perils: fraud and martyrdom.

"Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For false Christs and false prophets shall rise and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. Go not after them, nor follow them."

But although they are to flee from the frauds of the false Messiahs, they cannot escape the persecutions of the enemies of the real Christ. "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. . . . Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and the children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. . . . And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another . . . and because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved."

Then shall begin the signs of the imminent punishment, "And when ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrow."

These are the preliminary warnings: the order of the world shall be disturbed, the world, peaceful at the time when Christ pronounced these words, shall see man set against man, nation against nation, and the earth itself soaked with blood shall rise against men; shall tremble under their steps; shall cast down their houses; shall vomit out ashes, as if it cast out from the mouth of its mountains all its dead, and shall deny to the fratricides the food which ripens to gold every summer in the fields.

Then when all this shall have come to pass, the punishment will come upon those people who would not be born again in Christ, who did not accept the Gospel; on the city which nailed its Lord upon Golgotha and persecuted His witnesses.

"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel, the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains: and let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take anything out of his house: And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. But woe to them that are with child, and to them who give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in winter. For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. There shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

This is the end of the first prophecy. Jerusalem shall be taken and destroyed and of the Temple, defiled by the abomination of desolation, there shall remain not one stone upon another.

But Jesus has not said all, until now has not spoken of His second coming.

"Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." What are these "tempi dei Gentili, tempora nationum"? The words of the Greek texts express it with greater precision than the other languages: they are the times adapted to, fitting, and awaiting the Gentiles, that is, those in which the non-Jews shall be converted to the Gospel, announced to the Jews before all others. Therefore that real end shall not come until the Gospel has been carried into all nations, until the Gentiles, the faithless ones, tread down the city of Jerusalem. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

The second coming of Christ from Heaven, the Parusia, will be the end of this world and the beginning of the true world, the eternal kingdom. The end of Judea was announced by signs human and terrestrial; this other end will be preceded by signs divine and celestial. "The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light. And the stars of heaven shall fall. And upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after these things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

For the end of Jerusalem only, the little earth was troubled; but for this universal ending, Heaven itself is convulsed. In the great sudden blackness only the roaring of water will be heard, and screams of terror. It is the Day of the Lord, the day of God's wrath described in their times by Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Isaiah and Joel. "The day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come. A day of darkness and of gloominess! The land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness. The people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness. Therefore shall all hands be faint and every man's heart shall melt. And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrow shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth; they shall be amazed one at another. Behold the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree."

This is the day of the Father, day of blackness in the Heavens and of terror on earth. But the day of the Son follows immediately after.

He does not appear this time hidden in a stable, but on high in Heaven, no longer poor and wretched, but in power and splendor of glory. "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." And when the celestial trumpets shall have awakened all those sleeping in the tombs, the irrevocable division shall be made.

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

"And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

"And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left.

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

"For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

"Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

"When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

"Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

"For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

"I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

"Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

"Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

Jesus, even in His glory as judge of the last Day, does not forget the poor and unhappy whom He loved so greatly during His life on earth. He wishes to appear as one of those "least" who hold out their hands at the doors and on whom the "great" look down. On earth, in the time of Tiberius, He was the man who was hungering for bread and love, thirsting for water and martyrdom, who was like a stranger in His own country, not recognized by His own brothers, who stripped Himself to clothe those shaking with cold, who was sick with sorrow and suffering and no one comforted Him, who was imprisoned in the base prison of human flesh, in the narrow prison of earthly life. He was divinely hungering for souls, thirsting for faith, He was the stranger come from the ineffable fatherland, defenseless before whips and insults, the Man sick with the holy madness of love. But on that great Day of final Judgment, He will not be thinking of Himself, as He did not think of Himself when He was a man among men.

The code of this dividing of good from evil men will be based on one idea only: Compassion—Charity. During all the time which lies between His first and second coming He has gone on living under the appearance of the poor and the pilgrims, of the sick and persecuted, of wanderers and slaves. And on the Last Day He pays His debts. Mercy shown to those "least" was shown to Him, and He will reward that mercy in the name of all. Only those who did not receive Him when He appeared in the innumerable bodies of the poverty-stricken will be condemned to eternal punishment, because when they drove away the unfortunate they drove away God. When they refused bread, water and a garment to the poor man, they condemned the Son of God to cold, thirst and hunger. The Father had no need of your help, for all is His and He loves you even during the moments when you curse Him. But you must love the Father in the persons of His children. And those who did not quench the thirst of the thirsty will themselves thirst for all eternity; those who did not warm the naked man will suffer in fire for all eternity; those who did not comfort the prisoner will be prisoners of Hell forever; those who did not receive the stranger will never be received in Heaven, and those who did not help the fever-stricken patient will shiver in the spasms of everlasting fever.

The Great Poor Man in the day of His glory will, as justice dictates, reward every one with His infinite riches. He who has given a little life to the poor will have life forever; he who has left the poor in pain will himself be in pain forever. And then the bare sky will be peopled with other more powerful suns, with stars flaming more brightly in the heavens and there will be a new Heaven and a new Earth, and the Chosen will live not as we live now, like beasts, but in the likeness of angels.

WORDS WHICH SHALL NOT PASS AWAY

But when shall these things come to pass? These are the signs, this is the manner in which it shall happen. But the time? Shall we be still here, we who are now under the light of the sun? Or shall the grandchildren of our grandchildren see these events while we are dust and ashes under the earth?

Up to the very last, the Twelve understand as little as twelve stones. They have the truth before them and they do not see it: they have the Light in their midst and the Light does not reach them. If only they had been among stones like diamonds which send back, divided into reflected rays, the light which strikes them. But these twelve men are rough stones, scarcely dug out of the darkness of the quarry, dull stones, opaque stones, stones which the sun can warm but not kindle, stones which are lighted from without but do not reflect the splendor. They have not yet understood that Jesus is not a common diviner, a student of the Chaldeans and of the Etruscans, and that He has nothing to do with the presumptuous pretensions of astrology. They have not understood that a definitely dated prophecy would not work on men to create a conversion which needs perpetual vigilance. Perhaps they have not even understood that the Apocalyptic sayings revealed on the Mount of Olives form a double prophecy which refers to two events, different and distant from each other. Perhaps these provincial fishermen, for whom a lake was the sea and Judea was the universe, confused the end of the Hebrew people with the end of the human race, the punishment of Jerusalem with the second coming of Christ.

But the discourse of Jesus, although it is presented as one unit in the synoptic Gospels, shows us two distinct prophecies.

The first announces the end of the Jewish kingdom, the punishment of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple; the second the end of the old world, the reappearance of Jesus, the judgment of the merciful and of the merciless, the beginning of the New Kingdom. The first prophecy given is close at hand—this generation shall not pass before these things shall have arrived—and is local and limited, since it is concerned only with Judea and especially with Judea's metropolis. The hour and the day of the second are not known because certain events, slow to take place but essential, must precede this end, which, unlike the other, will be universal.

The first, as a matter of fact, was fulfilled to the letter, detail by detail, about forty years after the crucifixion, while many who had known Jesus were still living; the second coming, the triumphal Parusia, is still awaited by those who believe what He said on that day, "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away."

A few years after Jesus' death the signs of the first prophecy began to be seen. False prophets, false Christs, false apostles, swarmed in Judea, as snakes come out of their holes when dog-days arrive. Before Pontius Pilate was exiled, an impostor showed himself in Samaria, who promised to recover the sacred vessels of the Tabernacle hidden by Moses on Mount Gerizim. The Samaritans believed that such a discovery would be the prelude to the coming of the Messiah, and a great mob gathered threateningly on the mountain until it was dispersed by Roman swords.

Under Cuspius Fadus, the procurator who governed from 44 to 66, there arose a certain Theudas, who gave himself out for a great personage and promised great prodigies. Four hundred men followed him, but he was captured and decapitated, and those who had believed him dispersed. After him came an Egyptian Jew, who succeeded in gathering four thousand desperate men, and camping on the Mount of Olives announcing that at a sign from him the walls of Jerusalem would fall. The Procurator Felix attacked him and drove him out into the desert.

In the meantime, in Samaria, arose the notorious Simon Magus, he who bewitched people with his prodigies and incantations and announced himself as the Power of God. This man, seeing the miracles of Peter, wished to turn Christian, imagining that the Gospel was only one of those Oriental mysteries into which an initiation gave new powers. Repelled by Peter, Magus became the father of heresies. He believed that Ennœa first came from God and that it is now imprisoned in human beings: according to him Ennœa (or, the first conception of the Deity), was incarnate in Helen of Tyre, a prostitute who followed him everywhere; and faith in him and in Helen was a necessary condition of salvation. Cerinthus, the first Gnostic, was one of his followers, against whom John wrote his Gospel—and Menander, who boasted that he was Saviour of the world. Another Elxai mixed up the old and new Covenant, told stories of many incarnations besides those of Christ, and swaggered about with his followers, boasting of his magic powers. Hegesippus says that a certain Tebutis through jealousy of Simon, second Bishop of Jerusalem, formed a sect that recognized Jesus as Messiah, but in everything else was faithful to the old Judaism. Paul, in the Epistle to Timothy, puts the "Saints" on guard against Hymeneus, and Phyletus and Alexander. For such are false prophets, deceitful workers transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ, "who twisted truth and sowed the evil seed of heresy in the early church." A Dositheus had himself called Christ, and a certain Nicholas began with his errors the sect of the Nicolaitans, condemned by John in the Apocalypse: and the Zealots fomented incessant tumults, claiming that the Romans and all the heathen should be driven out in order that God might return to triumph with His own people.

The second sign, the persecution, arrived promptly. The Disciples had scarcely begun to preach the Gospel in Jerusalem when Peter and John were thrown into prison: freed, they were captured again, and beaten and commanded to speak no more in the name of Jesus. Stephen, one of the most ardent of the neophytes, was taken by the priests outside the city and stoned.

Under the rule of Agrippa the tribulations began afresh. In 42 Herod's descendant had James the Greater, the brother of John, killed by the sword; and for a third time Peter was imprisoned. In 62 James the righteous, called the brother of Our Lord, was thrown from the terrace of the Temple and killed. In 50 Claudius exiled the Christian Jews from Rome, "Impulsore Chrestus tumultuantes." In 58, on account of the conversion of Pomponia Græcina, the war against converts began in the capital of the Empire. In 64 the burning of Rome, desired and executed by Nero, was the pretext for the first great persecution. An innumerable multitude of Christians obtained their martyrdom in Rome and in the Provinces. Many were crucified: others wrapped in the "tunica molesta" lighted up the nocturnal amusement of the Cæsar: others wrapped in animal skins were given as food to dogs: many, enforced actors in cruel comedies, made a spectacle for amphitheaters and were devoured by lions. Peter died on the cross, nailed head downward. Paul ended under the ax a life which since his conversion had been one long torment. Ten years before his death in 57 he had been flogged five times by the Jews, beaten three times with rods by the Romans, three times imprisoned, three times shipwrecked, stoned and left for dead at Lystra. The greater part of the other Disciples met with similar fates. Thomas met a martyr's death in India, Andrew was crucified at Patras, Bartholomew was crucified in Armenia. Simon the Zealot and Matthew, like their Master, ended their lives on the cross.

Nor were there lacking wars and rumors of wars. When Jesus was killed, the "peace of Augustus" still existed, but very soon nations rise against nations and kingdoms against kingdoms. Under Nero the Britons rebel and massacre the Romans, the Parthians revolt and force the legions to pass under the yoke; Armenia and Syria murmur against foreign government; Gaul rises with Julius Vindex, Nero is near his end, the Spanish and Gallic legions proclaim Galba Emperor; Nero, fleeing from the Golden House, succeeds in being abject even in suicide. Galba enters Rome, but brings no peace; Nymphidius Sabinus at Rome, Capito in Germany, Clodius Macer in Africa, dispute the power with him. All are dissatisfied with him: on the 15th of January, 69, the Prætorians kill him and proclaim Otho. But the German legions had already proclaimed Vitellius and move on Rome. Conquered at Bedriacum Otho commits suicide, but Vitellius does not rule long either; the Syrian legions choose Vespasian, who sends Antonius Primus into Italy. The followers of Vitellius are defeated at Cremona and at Rome; Vitellius, the voracious hog, is killed on the 20th of December,

69. In the meanwhile insurrection breaks out in the north, with the Batavians, with Claudius Civilus, and the insurrection of the Jews is not stamped out in the east. In less than two years Italy is invaded twice, Rome taken twice, two Emperors kill themselves; two are killed. And there are wars and rumors of wars on the Rhine and on the Danube, on the Po and on the Tiber, on the banks of the North Sea, at the feet of Atlas and of Tabor.

The other afflictions announced by Jesus accompany in these years the upheaval of the Empire. Caligula the Mad complained because in his reign nothing horrible happened: he desired famines, pestilences and earthquakes. The degenerate and incestuous epileptic did not have his wish, but in the time of Claudius a series of poor crops brought famine even to Rome. Under Nero pestilence was added to the famine, and at Rome alone in one autumn the treasury of Venus Libitina registered thirty thousand deaths.

In 61 and 62 earthquakes shook Asia, Achaia, and Macedonia: especially the cities of Hierapolis, Laodicea and Colossæ were greatly damaged. In 63 it was Italy's turn: at Naples, Nocera and Pompeii the earth shook. All the Campagna was a prey to terror. And as if this were not enough, three years later, in 66, the Campagna was devastated by cloudbursts, which destroyed the crops and rendered more threatening the prospects of famine. And while Galba was entering Rome (68) the earth shook under his feet with a terrible roar. All the signs were fulfilled: now had come the fullness of time for the punishment of Judea.

JUDEA OVERCOME

The earthquake which shook Jerusalem on the Friday of Golgotha was like a signal for the Jewish outbreak. For forty years the country of the god-killers had no peace, not even the peace of defeat and slavery, up to the day, when of the Temple not one stone was left upon another.

Pilate, Cuspius Fadus and Agrippa had been forced to disperse the bands of the false Messiahs. Under the Roman procurator, Tiberius Alexander, the conflict began with the raging sect of the Zealots and ended with the crucifixion of the leaders, James and Simon, sons of Judas the Galilean. The procurator, Ventidius Cumanus, 48-52, did not have a day's peace: the Zealots and their allies, the Sicarii, did not lay down their arms. Under the procurator Felix the disorders knew no truce: under Albinus the flames of the revolt flared out more boldly. Finally at the time of Gessius Florus, 64-66, the last procurator of Judea, the fire, which for some time had been flickering, spread all over the country. The Zealots took possession of the Temple: Florus was obliged to flee, Agrippa, who went as peace-maker, was stoned, Jerusalem fell into the power of Menahem, another son of Judas the Galilean. Zealots and Sicarii now in power massacred the non-Jews and also those among the Jews who seemed tepid to their fanatic eyes.

And then finally came the abomination predicted by Daniel and recorded by Christ. The prophecy of Daniel had already been fulfilled when Antiochus IV Epiphanes had profaned the Temple by placing there the statue of Olympian Jove. In 39 Caligula the Mad, who had set himself up as God and had himself adored as God in various places, had sent the order to the procurator Petronius to put the imperial statue in the Temple, but he died before the order was executed. But Jesus was alluding to something quite other than statues. The holy place during the great rebellion occupied by the Sicarii had become a refuge for assassins, and the great courts were soaked with blood, even with priestly blood. And the Holy City underwent also the abomination of desolation, when in December of 66 Cestius Gallus, at the head of forty thousand men, came to crush the insurgents, camped around Jerusalem with those imperial insignia which the Jews held in horror as idolatrous, and which through a concession of the Emperors had not till then been introduced into the city.

But Cestius Gallus, finding more resistance than he had anticipated, retreated and the retreat was turned into flight to the great jubilation of the Zealots, who saw in this victory a sign of divine help.

In those days, between the first and second assault, when already the double abomination had contaminated the city, the Christians of Jerusalem, obeying the prophecy of Jesus, fled to Pela, beyond the Jordan But Rome had no intention of giving way to the Jews. The command of the punitive expedition was given to Titus Flavius Vespasian, who, gathering an army at Ptolemais in 67, advanced against Galilee and conquered it. While the Romans were taking up winter quarters, John of Gischala, one of the heads of the Zealots, having taken refuge in Jerusalem at the head of a band of Idumeans, overturned the aristocratic government and the city was full of uproar and blood.

Vespasian, going to Rome to become Emperor, gave the command to his son Titus, who on Easter Day in the year 70, came up before Jerusalem and began the siege. Horrible days began. Even at the height of danger, the Zealots, carried away by wild frenzy, quarreled among themselves, and split up into factions, who fought for the control of the city.

John of Gischala occupied the Temple, Simon Bar Giora the city, and their partisans cut the throats of those whom the Romans had not yet killed. In the meantime Titus had taken possession of two lines of wall and of a part of the city: on the fifth of July the Tower of Antonia fell into his power. To the horror of fratricidal massacre and of the siege was added that of hunger. The famine was so great that mothers were seen, so says Josephus, to kill their children and eat them. On the 10th of August the Temple was taken and burned, the Zealots succeeding in shutting themselves up into the upper city, but conquered by hunger they were obliged to surrender on the 7th of September.

The prophecies of Jesus had been fulfilled: the city by Titus' order was laid waste: and of the Temple already swept by fire, there remained not one stone upon another. The Jews who had survived hunger and the swords of the Sicarii were massacred by the victorious soldiery. Those who still remained were deported into Egypt to work in mines, and many were killed for the amusement of the crowd in the Amphitheaters of Cæsarea and Berytus. Some hundreds of the handsomest were taken prisoners to Rome to figure in the triumphal procession of Vespasian and Titus, and there Simon Bar Giora and other heads of the Zealots were executed before the idols which they hated.

"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." It was the seventieth year of the Christian era and His generation had not yet gone down into the tomb when these things happened. One at least of those who heard Him on the Mount of Olives, John, was witness of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the ruin of the Temple. Within the destined time the words of Jesus were fulfilled, syllable by syllable, with atrocious exactness, by a story of blood and fire.

THE PARUSIA

The end of the god-killing people, the partial and local ending, had taken place. According to the sentence of Christ, the statues of the Temple were scattered among the ruined walls and the faithful of the Temple had met their death by torture or were scattered among other nations.

The second prophecy is left. When shall the Son of Man come on the clouds of Heaven, preceded by darkness, announced by angels' trumpets? Jesus says that no one can be sure of the day of His coming. The Son of Man is likened to lightning which flashes suddenly in the east, to a thief who comes by stealth in the night, to a master who has gone far away and returns suddenly to take his servants by surprise. We must be vigilant and ready. Purify your hearts, because you do not know when He may come; and woe to him who is not ready to appear before Him. Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and the cares of this life; and so that day come upon you unawares, for as a snare shall it come upon all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

But if Jesus does not announce the day, He tells us what things must be fulfilled before that day. These things are two: the Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached to all the nations and the Gentiles shall no longer tread down Jerusalem. These two conditions are fulfilled in our own time and perhaps the great day approaches. There are no longer in the world any civilized nations or barbarous tribes where the descendants of the Apostles have not preached the Gospel: since 1918 the Moslems have no longer trodden down Jerusalem and there is talk of a reëstablishment of the Jewish State. According to the words of Hosea, the end of the time shall be near when the sons of Israel, left so long without altar and without King, shall be converted to the Son of David and shall turn, trembling, towards God's goodness.

If the words of the second prophecy are true, as the words of the first prophecy were shown to be true, the Second Coming cannot be far distant. Once again in these years nations have risen against nations, the earth has quaked, destroying many lives, and pestilences, famines and seditions have decimated nations. For more than a century the words of Christ have been translated and preached in all languages. Soldiers who believe in Christ, although they are not all faithful to the heirs of Peter, are in command over that city, which after its downfall was in the power of the Romans, the Persians, the Egyptians and the Turks. And still men do not think of Jesus and His promise. They live as if the world were always going to continue as it has been, and they work and mortify themselves only for their earthly and carnal interests.

"For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away: so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Likewise also, as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed."

The same thing happens in our day in spite of the wars and the pestilences which have cut down millions of lives in a few years. People eat and drink, marry and have children, buy and sell, write and play. And no one thinks of the Divine Thief who will come suddenly in the night, no one waits for the Real Master, who will return unexpectedly, no one looks at the sky to see if lightning is flashing from the east.

The apparent life of the living is like the delirious dream of a fatal fever. They seem awake because they hurry about without rest, occupied by those possessions which are clay and poison. They never look up to Heaven—they fear only their brothers. Perhaps they are waiting to be awakened in the last hour by those dead of old, who will rise up at the approach of the Resurrected Christ.

UNWELCOME

While Jesus was condemning the Temple and Jerusalem, those maintained by the Temple and the lords of Jerusalem were preparing His condemnation.

All those who possessed, taught and commanded were waiting only for the right moment to assassinate Him, without danger to themselves. Every man who had a name, dignity, a school, a shop, a sacred office, a little authority was against Him. He came to oppose them and they opposed Him. With the idiocy natural to those in power they believed that they would save themselves by putting Him to death, and they did not know it was exactly His death which was needed as the beginning of their punishment.

To have an idea of the hatred which the upper classes of Jerusalem felt towards Jesus, priestly hatred, scholastic hatred and commercial hatred, we must remember that the Holy City apparently lived by faith, but in reality on the Faithful. Only in the Jewish metropolis could valid and acceptable offerings be made to the Old God, and therefore every year, especially on great feast days, streams of Israelites poured in there from the Tetrarchates of Palestine and from all the provinces of the Empire. The Temple was not only the one legitimate sanctuary of the Jews, but for those who were attached to it and for all the others who lived at its feet, it was the great nourishing breast which fed the Capital with the products of the victims, the offerings, the tithes and, above all, with the profits accompanying the continual influx of visitors. Josephus says that at Jerusalem on special occasions there were gathered together as many as three million pilgrims.

The stationary population depended all the year round on the Temple: business for the animal-sellers, dealers in victuals, money-changers, inn-keepers, and even artisans depended on the fortunes of the Temple. The priestly caste, which without the Levites (and there were a great crowd of them) numbered in Christ's lifetime twenty thousand descendants of Aaron—got their living from the tithes in kind, from the taxes of the Temple, from the payments for the first-born—even the first-born of men paid five shekels a head!—and got their food from the flesh of the sacrificial animals, of which only the fat was burned. They were the ones who had the pick of herds and crops; even their bread was given them by the people, for the head of every Jewish family was obliged to hand over to the priests the twenty-fourth part of the bread which was baked in his house. Many of them, as we have seen, made money on the raising of the animals which the Faithful were obliged to buy for their offerings; others were associated with money-changers, and it is not impossible that some of them were really bankers, because people readily deposited their savings in the strong-boxes of the Temple.

A net-work of self-interest thus bound to the Herodian edifice all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, down to the vendors at fairs and the sandal-makers. The priests lived on the Temple and many of them were merchants and rich men: the rich needed the Temple to increase their profits and keep the common people respectful: the merchants did business with the rich people who had money to spend, with the priests who were their associates and with the pilgrims from every part of the world drawn towards the Temple: the working men and the poor lived from the scraps and leavings which fell from the tables of the rich, the priests, the merchants and the pilgrims.

Religion was thus the greatest and perhaps the only business in Jerusalem: any one who attacked religion, its representatives, its visible monument (which was the most famous and fruitful seat of religion), was necessarily considered an enemy of the people of Jerusalem, and especially of the prosperous and well-to-do.

Jesus with His Gospel threatened directly the positions and fees of these classes. If all the prescriptions of the Law were to be reduced to the practice of love, there would be no more place for the Scribes and Doctors of the Law who made their living out of their teachings. If God did not wish animal sacrifices and asked only for purity of soul and secret prayer, the priests might as well shut the doors of the Sanctuary and learn a new profession: those who did business in oxen and calves and sheep and lambs and kids and doves and sparrows would have seen their business slacken and perhaps disappear. If to be loved by God you needed to transform your life, if it were not enough to wash your drinking-cups and punctually pay your tithes, the doctrine and the authority of the Pharisees would be reduced to nothing. If in short the Messiah had come and had declared the Primacy of the Temple fallen and sacrifices useless, the capital of the cult would, from one day to the next, have lost its prestige and with the passage of time would have become an obscure settlement of impoverished men.

As a matter of course, Jesus, who preferred fishermen, if they were pure and loving, to members of the Sanhedrin; who took the part of the poor against the rich, who valued ignorant children more than Scribes, blear-eyed over the mysteries of the Scriptures, drew down on His head the hatred of the Levites, the merchants and the Doctors. The Temple, the Academy and the Bank were against Him: when the victim was ready they would call the somewhat reluctant, but nevertheless acquiescent Roman sword, to sacrifice Him to their peace of mind.

For some time the life of Jesus had not been safe. The Pharisees said that Herod had sought to kill Him from the days of His last sojourn in Galilee. Perhaps it was the knowledge of this that sent Him into Cæsarea Philippi, outside Galilee, where He predicted His passion.

When He came back to Jerusalem the High Priests, the

Pharisees and the Scribes gathered about Him to lay traps for Him and take down His words. The uneasy and embittered crowd set on His track spies, destined to become false witnesses in a few days. If we are to believe John, the order was given to certain guards to capture Him, but they were afraid to lay their hands upon Him. The attack with the whips on the animal-sellers and money-changers, the loud invectives against the Scribes and Pharisees, the allusion to the ruin of the Temple, made the cup run over. Time pressed; Jerusalem was full of foreigners and many were listening to Him. Some disorder, some confusion might easily spring up, perhaps an uprising of the provincial crowds who were less attached to the privileges and interests of the metropolis. The contagion must be stopped at the beginning and there seemed to be no better way than to make away with the blasphemer. The wolves of the Altar and of business arranged a meeting of the Sanhedrin to reconcile law with assassination.

THE HIGH PRIEST CAIAPHAS

The Sanhedrin was the assembly of the chiefs, the supreme council of the aristocracy which ruled the capital. It was composed of the priests jealous of the clientele of the Temple which gave them their power and their stipends: of the Scribes responsible for preserving the purity of the law and of tradition: of the Elders who represented the interests of the moderate, moneyed middle-class.

They were all in accord that it was essential to take Jesus on false pretenses and to have Him killed as a blasphemer against the Sabbath and the Lord. Only Nicodemus attempted a defense, but they were able quickly to silence him. "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." It is the Reason of State, the Salvation of the Fatherland which political cliques always bring out to screen with legality and ideality the defense of their particular profit.

Caiaphas, who that year was High Priest, settled their doubts with the maxim which has always justified in the eyes of the world the immolation of the innocent. "Ye know nothing at all nor consider that it is expedient that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation perish not." This maxim in Caiaphas' mouth, and on this occasion, and for what it meant, was infamous, and hypocritical like all the speeches made by the Sanhedrin. But transposed into a higher meaning and transferred into the Absolute, changing nation into humanity, the President of the circumcised patriciate was expounding a principle which Jesus Himself had accepted and which has become under another form the crucial mystery of Christianity. Caiaphas did not know—he who had to enter alone into the Holy of Holies to offer up to Jehovah the sins of the people—how much his words, coarse in expression and cynical in sentiment as they were, were in accord with his victim's thought.

The thought that only the righteous can pay for injustice, that only the perfect can discount the crimes of the brute, that only the pure can cancel the debts of the ignoble, that only God in His infinite magnificence can expiate the sins which man has committed against Him; this thought, which seems to man the height of madness exactly because it is the height of divine wisdom, certainly did not flash out in the corrupt soul of the Sadducee when he threw to his sixty accomplices the sophism destined to silence their last remorse. Caiaphas, who together with the crown of thorns and the sponge of vinegar was to be one of the instruments of the Passion, did not imagine in that moment that he was bearing witness solemnly, though involuntarily, to the divine tragedy about to begin.

And yet the principle that the innocent can pay for the guilty, that the death of one man can be salvation for all, was not foreign to the consciousness of ancient peoples. The heroic myths of the pagans recognize and celebrate voluntary sacrifices of the innocent. They record the example of Pilades, who offered himself to be punished in place of the guilty Orestes; Macaria of the blood of Heracles, who saved her brother's life with her own; Alcestis, who died that she might avert from her Admetus the vengeance of Artemis; the daughters of Erechtheus, who sacrificed themselves that their father might escape Neptune's blows. The old King Codrus, who threw himself into the Ilissus, in order that his Athenians might be victorious; and Decius Mus and his sons, who consecrated themselves to the Manes that the Romans might triumph over the Samnites; and Curtius, who, fully armed, cast himself into the gulf for the salvation of his country; and Iphigenia, who offered her throat to the knife that Agamemnon's fleet might sail safely towards Troy. At Athens during the Thargelian feast two men were killed to save the city from divine wrath; Epimenides the Wise, to purify Athens, profaned by the assassination of the followers of Cylon, had recourse to human sacrifice over the tombs; at Curium, in Cyprus, at Terracina, at Marseilles, every year a man threw himself into the sea as payment for the crimes of the community, a man regarded as the Saviour of the people.

But these sacrifices, when they were spontaneous, were for the salvation of one being alone, or of a restricted group of men; when they were enforced they added a new crime to those they were intended to expiate; they were examples of individual affection or of superstitious crimes.

No man had yet appeared who would take upon his head all the sins of men, a God who would imprison Himself in the abject wretchedness of flesh to save all the human race and to give it the power to ascend from bestiality to sanctity, from earthly humiliation to the Kingdom of Heaven. The perfect man, who takes upon himself all imperfections, the pure man who burdens himself with all infamies, the righteous man who shoulders the unrighteousness of all men, had appeared under the aspect of a poor fugitive from justice in the day of Caiaphas. He who was to die for all, the Galilean workingman who was disquieting the rich and the priests of Jerusalem, was there on the Mount of Olives only a short distance from the Sanhedrin. The Seventy, who knew not what they did, who did not know that they were obeying the will of the very man they were persecuting, decided to have Him captured before the Passover; but because they were cowardly, like all men of possessions, one thing restrained them, the fear of the people who loved Jesus. They consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety and kill Him. But they said, "Not on the feast day lest there be an uproar among the people." To solve their difficulty, by good fortune, there came to them the day after one of the Twelve, he who held the purse, Judas Iscariot.

THE MYSTERY OF JUDAS

Only two creatures in the world knew the secret of Judas: Christ and the traitor.

Sixty generations of Christians have racked their brains over it, but the man of Iscariot, although he has drawn after him crowds of disciples, remains stubbornly incomprehensible. His is the only human mystery that we encounter in the Gospels. We can understand without difficulty the depravity of Herod, the rancor of the Pharisees, the revengeful anger of Annas and Caiaphas, the cowardly laxity of Pilate. But we have no evidence to enable us to understand the abomination of Judas. The Four Gospels tell us too little of him and of the reasons which induced him to sell his King.

"Then entered Satan into Judas." But these words are only the definition of his crime. Evil took possession of his heart, therefore it came suddenly. Before that day, perhaps during the dinner at Bethany, Judas was not in the power of the Adversary. But why suddenly did he throw himself into that power? Why did Satan enter into him and not into one of the others?

Thirty pieces of silver are a very small sum, especially for an avaricious man. In modern coinage it would amount to about twenty dollars, and, granting that its effective value or as the economists say its buying power were in those days ten times greater, two hundred dollars seem hardly a sufficient price to induce a man whom his companions describe as grasping to commit the basest perfidy recorded by history. It has been said the thirty pieces of silver was the price of a slave. But the text of Exodus states on the contrary that thirty shekels was the compensation to be paid by the owner of an ox which had injured a slave. The cases are too far apart for the doctors of the Sanhedrin to have had this early precedent in mind.

The most significant indication is the office which Judas held among the Twelve. Among them was Matthew, a former tax-collector, and it would have seemed almost his right to handle the small amount of money necessary for the expenses of the brotherhood. In place of Matthew, we see the man of Iscariot as the depository of the offerings. Money is insidious and saturated with danger. The mere handling of money, even if it belongs to others, is poisonous. It is not surprising that John said of Judas the thief, that he, "having the bag, took away what was put therein." And yet it is not probable that a man greedy for money would have stayed a long time with a group of such poor men. If he had wished to steal, he would have sought out a more promising position. And if he had needed those miserable thirty pieces of silver, could he not have procured them in another way, by running away with the purse, without needing to propose the betrayal of Jesus to the High Priests?

These common-sense reflections about a crime so extraordinary have induced many to seek other motives for the infamous transaction. A sect of heretics, the Cainites, had a legend that Judas sorrowfully accepted eternal infamy, knowing that Jesus through His will and the will of the Father was to be betrayed to His death, that no suffering might be lacking in the great expiation. A necessary and voluntary instrument of the Redemption, Judas was according to them a hero and a martyr to be revered and not reviled.

According to others, Iscariot, loving his people and hoping for their deliverance, perhaps sharing the sentiments of the Zealots, had joined with Jesus, hoping that he was the Messiah such as the common people then imagined Him: the King of the revenge and restoration of Israel. When little by little, in spite of his slowness of comprehension, it dawned on him from the words of Jesus that he had fallen in with a Messiah of quite another kind, he delivered Him over to His enemies to make up for the bitterness of his disappointment. But this fancy to which no text either canonical or apocryphal gives any support is not enough to explain Christ's betrayer: he could have deserted the Twelve and gone in search of other company more to his taste, which certainly, as we have seen, was not lacking at that time.

Others have said that the reason is to be sought in his loss of faith. Judas had believed firmly in Jesus, and then could believe no longer. What Jesus said about His end close at hand, the threatening hostility of the metropolis, the delay of his victorious manifestation, had ended by causing Judas to lose all faith in Him whom he had followed up till then. He did not see the Kingdom approaching and he did see death approaching. Mingling with the people to find out the temper of the day, he had perhaps heard a rumor as to the decisions of the meeting of the Elders and feared that the Sanhedrin would not be satisfied with one victim alone, but would condemn all those who had long followed Jesus. Overcome by fear—the form which Satan took to enter into him—he thought he could ward off the danger and save his life by treachery; unbelief and cowardice being thus the ignominious motives of his ignominy.

An Englishman celebrated as an opium-eater, has thought out a new apology for the traitor which is the opposite of this theory. His idea is that Judas believed: he even believed too absolutely. He was so persuaded that Jesus was really the Christ that he wished by giving Him up to the Tribunal to force Him finally to show Himself as the legitimate Messiah. So strong was his hope that he could not believe that Jesus would be killed. Or if He really were to die, he knew with entire certainty that He would rise again at once to sit on the right hand of the Father as King of Israel and of the world. To hasten the great day, in which the Disciples were at last to have the reward for their faithfulness, Judas, secure in the intangibility of his Divine Friend, wished to force His hand and, putting Him face to face with those whom He was to cast out, to compel Him to show Himself as the true Son of God. According to this theory the action of Judas was not a betrayal but a mistake due to his misunderstanding of the real meaning of his Master's teaching. He did not betray therefore through avarice or revengefulness or cowardice, but through stupidity.

On the other hand others give revenge as the reason. No man betrays another without hating him. Why did Judas hate Jesus? They remember the dinner in the house of Simon and the nard of the weeping woman. The reproof for his stinginess and hypocrisy must have exasperated the disciple who perhaps had been reproved for these faults on other occasions. To the rancor of this rebuff was added envy which always flourishes in vulgar souls. And as soon as he could revenge himself without danger, he went to the palace of Caiaphas.

But did he really think that his denunciation would bring Jesus to His death or did he rather suppose that they would content themselves with flogging Him and forbidding Him to speak to the people? The rest of the story seems to show that the condemnation of Jesus unnerved him as a terrible and unexpected result of his kiss. Matthew describes his despair in a way to show that he was sincerely horrified by what had happened through his fault. The money which he had pocketed became like fire to him: and when the priests refused to take it back he threw it down in the Temple. Even after this restitution he had no peace and hastened to kill himself. He died on the same day as his victim. Luke in the Acts sets down in another way the evil end of Judas, but the Christian tradition prefers the story of his remorse and suicide.

In spite of all the unraveling of unsatisfied minds, mysteries are still tangled about the mystery of Judas. But we have not yet invoked the testimony of Him who knew better than all men, even better than Judas, the true secret of the betrayal. Jesus alone could give us the key to the mystery; Jesus who saw into the heart of Judas as into the hearts of all men, and who knew what Judas was to do before he had done it.

Jesus chose Judas to be one of the Twelve and to carry the gospel to the world along with the others. Would He have chosen him, kept him with Him, beside Him, at His table, for so long a time if He had believed him to be an incurable criminal? Would He have confided to him what was dearest in the world to Him, the most precious thing in the world—the prophecy of the Kingdom of God?

Up to the last days, up to that last evening, Jesus treated Judas exactly like the others. To him, as to all others, He gave His body, symbolized by bread, His soul, symbolized by wine. He washed and wiped, with His own hands, the feet of Judas, those feet which had carried him to the house of Caiaphas—with those hands which, through Judas' fault, were to be nailed to the cross on the following day. And when, in the red light of the flickering lanterns and the flashing of swords, Judas, under the dark shadow of the olive trees, came and kissed that face still wet with bloody sweat, Jesus did not repel him, but said, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?"

Friend! It was the last time that Jesus spoke to Judas, and even in that moment He would use none other than that wonted word. Judas was not for Him the man of darkness who came in the darkness to turn Him over to the guards, but the friend, the same who a few hours before had been sitting with Him before the dish of lamb and herbs, and had set his lips to His cup: the same who, so many times in hours of rest in leafy shade, or in the shadow of walls, had listened with the others like a disciple, like a companion, like a friend, like a brother, to the great words of the Promise. Jesus had said at the Last Supper, "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born." But now that the traitor was before Him, that the treachery was complete, now that Judas had added to that betrayal the outrage of the kiss laid on the lips of Him who has commanded love for our enemies, He answered him with the sweet and divine words of their habitual intercourse, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?"

Thus the testimony of Him who was betrayed increases our bewilderment instead of raising the veil of the dreadful secret. He knew that Judas was a thief and He gave him the purse: He knew that Judas was evil and He confided to him a treasure of truth infinitely more precious than all the money in the universe: He knew that Judas was to betray Him and He made him a participant of His divinity, offering him the mouthful of bread and the sip of wine; He saw Judas leading His assailants upon Him and He still addressed him as at first, as He always had, with the holy name of friend.

"It had been good for that man if he had not been born." These words might have been, rather than a condemnation, an exclamation of pity at the thought of a fate which could not be escaped. If Judas hated Jesus, we see no signs that Jesus was ever repelled by Judas, because Jesus knew that the base bargain was necessary, as the weakness of Pilate was necessary, the rage of Caiaphas, the insults of the soldiery, the timbers and nails of the cross. He knew that Judas must needs do what he did and He did not curse him, as He did not curse the people who wished His death, or the hammer which drove the nails into the cross. One prayer alone broke from him, to beg Judas to shorten the dreadful agony, "That thou doest, do quickly."

The mystery of Judas is doubly tied to the mystery of the Redemption and we lesser ones shall never solve it.

No analogy can give us light. Joseph also was sold by one of his brothers, who, like Iscariot, was called Judas, and was sold to Ishmaelite merchants for twenty pieces of silver, but Joseph, who prefigured Christ, was not sold to his enemies, was not sold to be put to death: and as a compensation for his betrayal, great good fortune was his and he became so wealthy that he could enrich his father, and so generous that he could pardon even his brothers.

Jesus was not only betrayed, but sold, sold for a price, sold for a small price, bought with coins. He was the object of a bargain, a bargain struck and paid. Judas, the man of the purse, the cashier, did not present himself as an accuser, did not offer himself as a cut-throat, but as a merchant doing business in blood. The Jews, who understood bartering for blood, daily cutting the throats of victims, and quartering them, butchers of the Most High, were the first and last customers of Judas. The sale of Jesus was the first business done by the merchant, just entering business; not very big business, it must be admitted, but a real, true commercial transaction, a valid contract of buying and selling, verbal, but honestly lived up to by the contracting parties. If Jesus had not been sold, something would have been lacking to the perfect ignominy of His expiation: if He had been sold for more money, for three hundred shekels instead of thirty, for gold instead of silver, the ignominy would have been diminished, slightly, but still diminished. It had been destined to all eternity that He should be bought, but bought with a small sum. In order that an infinite, supernatural but communicable value should be made available to men, it was needful to buy it with a small sum, and with a sum of metal, which has no real value. Did Jesus bought by others not do the same, He who wished to redeem with the blood of only one man all the blood shed on the earth from the days of Cain to Caiaphas?

And if He had been sold as a slave, as so many living souls were sold in those days in the public places, if He had been sold as redeemable property, as human capital, as a living tool for work, the ignominy would have been almost nothing, and the Redemption put off. But He was sold as the calf is sold to the butcher, as the innocent animals which the butcher buys to kill, to sell again, to distribute in morsels to flesh-eaters. The sacred butcher, Caiaphas, never in his most successful days had a victim so prodigious. For more than two thousand years Christians have been fed on that victim, and it is still intact, and those who feed are not satiated.

Every one of us has contributed his quota, an infinitesimal quota, to buy that victim from Judas. We have all contributed towards the sum for which the blood of the Redeemer was bought: Caiaphas was only our agent. The field of Aceldama, bought with the price of blood, is our inheritance, our property. And this field has grown mysteriously larger, has spread over half the face of the earth: whole populous cities, paved, lighted, well-ordered cities, of shops and brothels, shine resplendent on it from north to south. And that the mystery should be even greater, Judas' money, also multiplied by the betrayals of so many centuries, by the accumulation of interest, has become incalculably great. Nothing is so fruitful and fecund as blood. The statisticians, those soothsayers of modern days, can bear witness to the fact that all the courts of the Temple could not contain the money engendered from that day to this by those thirty pieces of silver cast down there in a delirium of remorse, by the man who sold his God.

THE MAN WITH THE PITCHER

The bargain was struck, the price paid, the buyers were impatient to finish the transaction. They had said "before the Feast day." The great feast day of the Passover fell on a Saturday and this was Thursday.

Jesus had but one more day of freedom, the last day.

Before leaving His friends, those who were to abandon Him that night, He wished once more to dip His bread in the same platter with them. Before the Syrian soldiery should have spit upon Him, before He should be defiled by the Jewish filth, He wished to kneel down and wash the feet of those who until the day of their death were to travel all the roads of the earth to tell the story of His death. Before the blood dropped from His hands, His feet, His chest, He wished to give the first fruits to those who were to be one soul with Him until the end. Before suffering thirst, nailed upon the cross, He wished to drink a cup of wine with His companions. This last evening before His death was to be like an anticipation of the banquet of the Kingdom.

On the evening of Thursday, the first day of unleavened bread, the Disciples asked Him, "Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?"

The Son of Man, poorer than the foxes, had no home of His own. He had left His home in Nazareth forever. The home of Simon of Capernaum, which had been in the early days like His own, was far away; and the home of Mary and Martha in Bethany, where He was almost Master, was too far outside the city.

He had only enemies in Jerusalem or shame-faced friends:

Joseph of Arimathea was to receive Him as his guest only the next evening, in the dark cave, the banquet-hall of worms.

But a condemned man on his last day has a right to any favor he may ask. All the houses of Jerusalem were rightfully His. The Father would give Him the house best suited to shelter His last joy. And He sent two Disciples with this mysterious command, "Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water; follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the good man of the house, the Master saith, My time is at hand; where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us."

It has been believed that the master of that house was a friend of Jesus and that they had arranged this beforehand. But that cannot be. Jesus would have sent the two Disciples straight to him, giving his name, and would not have had recourse to the following of the man with the pitcher.

There were many men on the morning of that feast day who must have been coming up from Shiloah with pitchers of water. The two Disciples were to follow the first one whom they saw before them. They did not know why they were not to stop him instead of going after him to see where he went in. His master, since he had a servant, certainly was not a poor man, and in his house, as in all those of prosperous people, there would certainly be a room suitable for serving a supper, and he would know at least by hearsay who "the Master" was. In those days at Jerusalem there was little talk of anything else. The request was one which could not be refused. "The Master saith, My time is at hand." The time which was "His" was the hour of death. No one could shut out from his house a man at the point of death, who wished to satisfy his hunger for the last time. The Disciples set out, found the man with the pitcher, entered the house, talked with the master, prepared there what was necessary for the supper: lamb cooked on the spit, round loaves without leaven, bitter herbs, red sauce, the wine of thanksgiving, and warm water. They set the couches and pillows about the table and spread over it the white cloth. On the cloth they set the few dishes, the candelabra, the pitcher full of wine, and one cup, one cup only to which all were to set their lips. They forgot nothing: both were experienced in this preparation. From childhood up, in their home beside the lake, they had watched, wide-eyed, the preparations for the most heart-warming feast of the year. And it was not the first time since they had been with Him whom they loved, that they had thus eaten all together of the feast of the Passover. But for that last day—and perhaps their dull minds had at last understood the dreadful truth that it was really the last—for this last supper which all the thirteen were to have together, for this Passover which was the last for Jesus and the last valid Passover for old Judaism because a new covenant was about to begin for all countries and all nations: for this festal banquet which was a memorial of life, and a warning of death, the Disciples performed those humble menial tasks with a new tenderness, with that pensive joy that almost brings tears.

With the setting of the sun, the other ten came with Jesus and placed themselves around the table, now in readiness. All were silent as if heavy-hearted with a presentiment which they were afraid to see reflected in their companions' eyes. They remembered the supper in Simon's house, almost funereal, the odor of the nard, the woman and her endless weeping, and Christ's words on that evening, and His words of those last days; the repeated warnings of ignominy and of the end; the signs of hatred increasing about them, and the indications, now very plain, of the conspiracy, which with all its torches was about to come out from the darkness.

But two of them—for opposite reasons—were more oppressed, more moved than the others: the two for whom this was the last of their lives, the two who were about to die: Christ and Judas, the one sold and the seller; the Son of God and the abortion of Satan.

Judas had finished his bargain, he had the thirty pieces of silver on his person wrapped tightly so that they would not clink. But he knew no peace. The Enemy had entered into him, but perhaps the friend of Christ was not yet dead in his heart. To see Him there in the midst of His friends, calm but with the pensive expression of the man who is the only one who knows a secret, who is aware of a crime, a betrayal; to see Him, still at liberty in the company of those who loved Him, still alive, all the blood still in His veins under the delicate protection of the skin—and yet those bargainers who had paid the price refused to wait any longer, the affair was arranged for that very night!—and they were only waiting for Judas to act. But suppose Jesus, who must know all, had denounced him to the eleven? And suppose they, to save their Master, had thrown themselves on Judas to bind him, perhaps to kill him? Judas began to feel that to betray Christ to His death was perhaps not enough to save himself from the death, which he so greatly feared and yet which was near upon him.

All these thoughts darkened his somber face, more and more blackly, and at times terrified him. While the more active ones busied themselves with the last arrangements for serving the supper, he looked furtively at the eyes of Jesus—clear eyes scarcely veiled with the loving sadness of parting—as if to read there the revocation of his fate, so close at hand. Jesus broke the silence: "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

Such great love had not up to that moment been expressed by any words of Christ to His friends: such a longing for the day of perfect union, for the feast, so ancient and destined to so great a sublimation. They knew that He loved them; but until this evening their poor bruised hearts had not felt how poignant His love was. He knew that this evening was the last respite of rest and cheer before His death, and yet He had desired it ardently as though it were a boon, with that fervor which is the mark of passionate souls, souls on fire, loving souls, those who battle for the love of victory, who endure all things for a high prize. He had ardently desired to eat this Passover with them. He had eaten others: He had eaten with them thousands of other times, seated in boats, in their friends' houses, in strangers' houses, in rich men's houses, or seated beside the road, in mountain pastures, in the shadow of bushes on the shore; and yet for so long He had ardently desired to eat with them this supper which was the last! The blue skies of happy Galilee, the soft winds of the spring just passed, the sun of the last Passover, the waving branches of His triumphant entry, did He think of them now? Now He saw only His first friends and His last friends, the little group destined to be diminished by treachery, and dispersed by cowardice. Still, for a time they were there about Him in the same room, at the same table, sharing with Him the same overwhelming grief, but sharing also the light of a supernatural certainty.

Up to that day He had suffered, but not for Himself; He had suffered because of His ardent desire for this nocturnal hour, when the air was already heavy with the tragedy of farewells. And, when He had thus told them how great was His love, Christ's face, soon to be buffeted, shone with that noble sadness which is so strangely like joy.

THE WASHING OF THE FEET

Now that He was on the point of being snatched from those whom He loved, He wished to give them a supreme proof of this love. From the time they had begun to share His life, He had always loved them, all of them, even Judas: He always loved them with a love surpassing all other affections, a love so bountiful that their narrow hearts could not always contain it; but now about to leave them, knowing that He was to be with them again only when transfigured after death, all His hitherto unexpressed affection overflowed in a great wave of tender sadness.

Before beginning the supper where He was the head of the family, He wished to be kinder than a Father, humbler than a servant. He was their King, and He would humble Himself to the service performed by slaves: He was their Master and He would put Himself below the level of His disciples; He was the Son of God and He would accept a position despised of men: He was the first and He would kneel before His inferiors as if He had been the last. So many times, to rebuke their pride and jealousy, He had told them that the Master must serve his servants, that the Son of Man was come to serve, that the first must be last. But His words had not yet been assimilated by those souls, since even up to the last, they continued to quarrel for priority and precedence.

For raw, untrained minds, action has more meaning than words. Jesus prepared Himself to repeat, with the symbolic aspect of a humiliating service, one of His most important instructions. John tells us, "He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded."

Only a mother or a slave would have done what Jesus did that evening. The mother would have done it for her little children, but for no one else: the slave for his masters, but for no others. The mother would have served joyfully because of her love, the slave would have been resigned through obedience. But the Twelve were neither Christ's children nor His masters. Son of Man and of God, His love was above that of all earthly mothers,—King of a kingdom existing in the future, but more legitimate than all existing monarchies, He was the unrecognized Master of all masters.

And yet He was willing to wash and wipe those twenty-four callous and sweaty feet, in order to engrave on those unwilling hearts, still swollen with vanity, the truth which His lips had so long vainly pronounced; "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."

So after He had washed their feet and taken His garments and was set down again He said unto them, "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither is he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Jesus had not only given them a memory of complete humility, but an example of perfect love. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you."

But this action, with its deep meaning hidden under the appearance of menial service, signifies purification as well as love. "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all."

The eleven, although not of lofty character, had some right to this cleansing service from Jesus. For many months those feet had trodden the dusty, muddy, filthy roads of Judea to follow Him who brought life; and after His death, year by year, they were to tread longer and harder roads in countries the very names of which they then did not know; and foreign clay would soil the sandaled feet of those who were to go as pilgrims and strangers to repeat the call of the Crucified One.

TAKE—EAT

These thirteen men had apparently come together to perform the old social rite in memory of the liberation of their people from Egyptian slavery. They seemed to be thirteen devout men of the people, waiting about a white table redolent of roasted lamb and wine, for the signal to begin an intimate and festal supper.

But this was only in appearance. In reality it was a vigil of leave-taking and separation. Two of these thirteen, He into whom God had entered and he into whom Satan had entered, were to die terrible deaths before the next nightfall. The very next day the others were to be dispersed, like reapers at the first downfall of hail.

But this supper which was the viaticum of an ending, was also a wonderful beginning. In the midst of these thirteen Jews the observance of the Jewish Passover was about to be transfigured into something incomparably higher and more universal, into something unequaled and ineffable; into the great Christian mystery. The simple eating of bread was to become actual communion with God.

For the Jews, Easter is only the feast in memory of their flight from Egypt. They never forgot their victorious escape from their slavery, accompanied by so many prodigies, so manifestly under God's protection, although they were to bear on their necks the yokes of other captivities, and to undergo the shame of other deportations. Exodus prescribed an annual festivity which took the name of the Passover; Pasch, the paschal feast. It was a sort of banquet intended to bring to mind the hastily prepared food of the fugitives. A lamb or a goat should be roasted over the fire, that is, cooked in the simplest and quickest way; bread without leaven, because there was no time to let yeast rise. And they were to eat of it with their loins girded, their staves in their hands, eating in haste, like people about to set out upon a journey. The bitter herbs were the poor wild grasses snatched up as they went along by the fugitives, to dull the hunger of their interminable wanderings. The red sauce, where the bread was dipped, was in memory of the bricks which the Jewish slaves were obliged to bake for the Pharaohs. The wine was something added: the joy of escape, the hope of the land of promise, the exaltation of thanksgiving to the Eternal.

Jesus changed nothing in the order of this ancient feast. After the prayer He had them pass from hand to hand the cup of wine, calling on God's name. Then He gave the bitter herbs to each one and filled a second time the cup which was to be passed around the table for each to sip.

What taste did that wine have in the mouth of the traitor, when Jesus in that deep silence pronounced those words of longing and hope which were not for Judas, but only for those who could ascend to the eternal banquet of the Father: Take this and divide it among yourselves, "but I say unto you I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

A sad farewell; but nevertheless the confirming of a solemn promise. Perhaps they felt only the promise, and perhaps there flashed before their poor men's eyes a vision of the great Heavenly feast. They did not believe that they would have a long time to mourn: after that other vintage-time, after the fruit of the vine had fermented, and the sweet wine had been poured into the flasks, the Master would return, as He had promised, to summon them to the great wedding of Heaven and Earth, to the everlasting banquet. They must have thought, "We are men growing old, elderly men, more than mature, within sight of old age; if the Bridegroom tarries too long He will not find us among the living, and those who have believed Him will be mocked at."

Comforted by the certainty of an early and glorious reunion, they chanted together, as the custom was, the Psalm of the first Thanksgiving, a chant of praise to the Father from Him who served Him. "Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob; which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters. —He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dung-hill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people."

These old words, colored at that moment with a new meaning, were sung with a joyful conviction of their truth. They, too, the Disciples, were poor men and they would be raised out of the dust of poverty by the intercession of the Son of God: they too were poor men and He would soon raise them out of the misery of their beggary, to make them masters of inconsumable wealth.

Then Jesus, who saw how insufficiently they understood, took the loaves, blessed them, broke them and, as He gave them each a piece, set the dreadful truth before their eyes. "Take, eat; This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me."

So He was not to return as quickly as they thought! After His brief stay during the Resurrection, His second coming was to be delayed, so long that it might be possible to forget Him and His death.

"This do in remembrance of me." The breaking of bread at the common table among those who await Him shall be the signal of a new brotherhood. Every time that you break bread, I will not only be present among you, but by that means you will be intimately united with me. Because, as this bread is broken in my hands, my body will be broken by my enemies. As this bread eaten to-night will be your food until to-morrow, my body which I will offer in death to all men shall satisfy the hunger of those who believe in me, until the day when the great granaries of the Kingdom shall be open to all, when you shall be angels in the presence of your Father whom you shall have found again. I will leave you therefore not merely a memory; I will be present with a mystic but real presence in every particle of bread consecrated to me and this bread shall be a living necessary food for souls, and my promise to be with you shall be fulfilled till time shall be no more.

In the meantime, this evening, eat this unleavened bread, this bread made by the hand of man, made of water and grain, these loaves which have felt the heat of the oven and which my hands, not yet cold in death, have divided amongst you—and which my love has changed into my flesh so that it may be your everlasting food. It is sweet to the heart of a friend to see his friends eating bread at his table, bread born of the earth, bread which was green blades with flowering lilies among them, and then the ripe ear bending down the tall stalk with its golden weight. You know how many efforts, how much anxiety, how much trouble, are contained in a piece of bread; how the great oxen cultivated the earth, how the countrymen threw great handfuls of the grain into the fallow land in winter, how the first blade softly penetrated the damp darkness of the earth, how the reapers all day long cut down the ripened stalks, and then the sheaves were bound, and carried to the threshing floor and beaten so that the ears let fall the grain. The workers must wait for a little wind, neither too gentle nor too violent, to winnow out the good grain from the chaff.

Then they grind it, sift out the bran from it, make a dough with warm water, heat the oven with dry grass or twigs. All this must be done with love and patience before the father may break a piece with his children, the friend with his friends, the host with strangers. Plowers, sowers, reapers, winnowers, millers and bakers sweat in the heat of the sun, in the heat of the oven, before the golden wheat can be transformed into well-baked golden bread for our table.

Truly it is sweet to eat good wholesome bread with friends: the soft white crumb, covered with the crisp crust. So many times with me you have begged bread in poor men's houses; and all your lives you are to beg it in my name: you will have the moldy hard crusts which dogs refuse, the dry bits left at the bottom of the dish, the crusts gnawed by children and old people which they have let fall upon the hearth. But you know want, and nights of fasting and the pale face of poverty. But you are strong; you have the powerful jaws of those who eat hard bread. You will not lose courage, if no place is made for you at the tables of the well-to-do.

But verily it is infinitely sweeter for Him who loves you to transform the bread which comes from the hard earth and from hard labor into the Body which will be eternally offered for you, into the Body which every day will come down from Heaven as the visible means of grace.

Remember the prayer which I taught you: "Give us this day our daily bread—" For to-day and for always your bread is this bread, my Body. He shall never know hunger who shall eat my Body, which every morning throughout endless centuries shall be changed into endless morsels of transubstantiated bread. But whosoever shall refuse it, shall be anhungered to all eternity.

WINE AND BLOOD

As soon as they had eaten the lamb with the bread and the bitter herb, Jesus filled the common cup for the third time and gave it to the Apostle nearest Him, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many."

His blood, mixed with sweat, had not yet fallen on the ground, under the olives, and had not yet dropped from the nails upon Golgotha. But His desire to give life with His life, to redeem with His suffering all the sorrows of the world, to transmit at least a part of His substance to His immediate heirs; this desire to give Himself up wholly for those whom He loves is so great that from this moment on, He feels the immolation complete and the gift possible. If bread is the body, blood is in a certain sense the soul. The Lord said to Noah: "But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat." With blood as visibly representing life, the God of Abraham and of Jacob had established the covenant with His own people. When Moses had received the law, he had sacrificed oxen, took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar: "And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words."

But after a trial of many centuries, God had announced by the voice of the prophets that the Old Covenant was obliterated and abrogated, and that another was henceforth necessary. The blood of animals sprinkled upon stubborn heads and upon blaspheming faces had lost its virtue; another Blood, purer and more precious, was needed for the New Covenant, for the Last Covenant of the Father with His perjured children. In many ways He had already tried to lead His first-born towards the narrow door of salvation; the rain of fire on Sodom, the washings of the waters of the flood, the Egyptian slavery, hunger in the desert, had terrified them without reforming them.

And now there had come a Liberator at once more divine and more human than the old Captain of Exodus. Moses also saved a people, spoke upon a mountain, announced a promised land. But Jesus saves not only His people, but all peoples; writes His laws not upon stone, but upon human hearts; and His promised land is not a country of rich grazing-land and vineyards, with great clusters of grapes, but a Kingdom of holiness and eternal joy. Moses had killed a man, and Jesus brought the dead to life; Moses changed water into blood and Jesus, after having changed water into wine at the wedding banquet, changed wine into blood, into His own blood, at the melancholy last supper of His marriage with death. Moses died full of years and honors on a solitary mountain top, glorified by his people; and Jesus was to die among the insults of those whom He loved.

The blood of oxen, the impure blood of earthly animals, involuntary and inferior victims, is no longer sufficient. The New Covenant was established that night with the words of Christ, who under the appearance of wine shed His own blood and His own soul: "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."

It was shed not merely for the Twelve who were there; they represent in His eyes all of humanity alive at that time and all those to be born thereafter. The blood which was to be shed the next day, on Golgotha, was real blood, actual, warm blood congealing on the cross in clots which all the tears shed by Christians can never wash away. But the blood of the Last Supper symbolizes a soul which gave itself up to make over into His own likeness, the souls shut up in the bodies of men: which was given to those who asked for it and to those who fled away from it, which had suffered for the sake of those who had received it and for those who had blasphemed it. This baptism of blood which came after the baptism of water by John, after the baptism of tears by the women of Bethany, after the baptism of spitting by the Jews and by the Romans, this baptism of blood, red as the baptism of fire announced by the prophet of fire, and mixed with the tears shed by women over His blood-stained body, this is the greatest sacrament, revealed to His betrayers, by Him who was betrayed.

I have broken bread for you, daily bread for which you pray every day to the Father, as my body will be broken to-morrow, and I offer you now my blood in this wine which

I drink for the last time on earth. If you always do this in memory of me, you will feel no hunger, no thirst. There is no food better than wheat-bread, and no drink better than wine, but the bread and wine which I have given you to-night will feed you and quench your thirst for all your lives, by virtue of my sacrifice and of that love which makes me seek for death and which reigns beyond death.

Ulysses advised Achilles to give the Achaians, before they went into battle, "bread and wine that they should have strength and courage." For the Greek the strength of his members came from bread and homicidal courage from wine. Wine was to intoxicate men so that they should destroy each other and bread was to strengthen their arms so that they could battle without weakness. The bread given by Christ does not strengthen the flesh, but the soul, and His wine gives that divine intoxication which is Love, that Love which the Apostle, scandalizing the descendants of Ulysses, was to call in his Epistle to the Corinthians, "the foolishness of God."

Judas also ate that bread and swallowed that wine, partook of that body, in which he had trafficked, drank that blood which he was to help shed, but he had not the courage to confess his infamy, to throw himself down weeping at the feet of Him who would have wept with him. Then the only friend remaining to Judas warned him, "Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me."

The eleven were capable of leaving Him alone in the midst of Caiaphas' guards, but they never could have brought themselves to sell Him for money, and at this they shuddered. Every one looked in his neighbor's face, almost dreading to see in his companion the livid look of guilt, and all, one after the other, said, "Lord, is it I?"

Even Judas, hiding his increasing confusion under the appearance of offended astonishment, was able to force his voice to say, "Lord, is it I?" But Jesus, who the next day would not defend Himself, would not even bring an accusation and only repeated the sad prophecy in more definite words, "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me." And while they all still gazed at Him in painful doubt, for the third time He insisted, . . . "The hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table." He added no more, but to follow the old customs up to the last, He filled the cup for the fourth time and gave it to them to drink. And once more the thirteen voices rang out in the old hymn, the "great hallel" which ended the liturgy of the Passover. Jesus repeated the vigorous words of the Psalmist which were like a prophetic funeral oration for Him, pronounced before His death. "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear; what can man do unto me? . . . They compassed me about like bees: they are quenched as the fire of thorns. . . . I shall not die, but live. . . . The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death. Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord: . . . The stone which the builders refused is become the headstone of the corner. . . . Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar."

The victim was ready and the next day the inhabitants of Jerusalem were to see a new altar of wood and iron. But perhaps the Disciples, sleepy and confused, did not understand the new meaning both melancholy and triumphant of the old canticles.

When the hymn was ended they left the room and the house, at once. As soon as they had emerged from the house Judas disappeared into the night. The remaining eleven silently followed Jesus, who, as was His wont, made His way to the Mount of Olives.

ABBA FATHER

On the Mount there was a garden, and a place where olives were crushed, which gave it its name, Gethsemane. Jesus and His friends had been spending the nights there, either to avoid the odors and noise of the great city, distasteful to them, country-bred as they were, or because they were afraid of being treacherously captured in the midst of their enemies' houses.

And when He was at the place, He said to His disciples, "Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder."

But He was so heavy-hearted that He dreaded being alone. He took with Him the three whom He loved the best, Simon Peter, James and John. And when they had gone a little way from the others, He began to be sorrowful and very heavy. "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with me."

If they answered Him no one knows what they said. But we know that they did not comfort Him with the words which come from the heart when it shares the suffering of a loved one, for He withdrew Himself from them alone, and went further on, to pray. He fell on the ground on His face and prayed, saying, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me."

He was alone now, alone in the night, alone in the midst of men, alone before God, and He could show His weakness without shame. After all, he was a Man, too, a man of flesh and blood, a living, breathing man, who knew that His destruction was at hand, that His body would be destroyed, that His flesh would be pierced, that His blood would be poured out on the ground.

This was the second temptation. After the defeat of Satan in the desert, the Evangelist says: "he departed from him for a season." He had left Him till this moment. Now He was in a new desert, terribly alone in the darkness, more alone than in the desert where the wild beasts served Him. Cloaked and learned wild beasts were at hand now, but only to tear Him to pieces. In that terrible nocturnal desert, Satan returned to tempt his enemy; at first he had promised Christ, kingdoms, victories, and prodigies, he had tried to draw Him by the bait of power. Now, on the contrary, he counted on His weakness. At the beginning of His life, Christ burning with confident love had not fallen into his trap, but Christ near His end, abandoned by those nearest to Him, encompassed by His enemies, might be conquered by fear, even though He had risen above cupidity. The prayer to the Father was at the instigation of Satan, was a beginning of cowardice. Jesus knew He must die, that His death was necessary, that He had come to give life by His death, to confirm by His death that greater life which He announced. He had made no effort to avoid death, He had been willing to die for His friends, for all men, for those who did not know Him, for those who hated Him, for those not yet born. He had predicted His death to His friends, had already given them the rewards of His death, the bread of His body, the blood of His soul; and He had no right to ask the Father that the cup might pass from His lips or that His death might be delayed. He had written His words on the dust of the public place, and the wind had quickly obliterated them. He had written them on the hearts of a few men, but He knew how easily effaced are words written on the hearts of men. If His truth were to remain forever on the earth so that no one could ever forget it He must write it with His blood. Only with the blood in our veins can truth be written permanently on the pages of earth so that it will not fade under men's footsteps or under the rainfall of centuries. The Cross is the rigorously necessary consequence of the Sermon on the Mount. He who brings love is given over to hatred, and He can only conquer hatred by accepting condemnation. Everything must be paid for, the good at a higher price than evil; and the greatest good, which is love, must be paid for by the greatest evil in men's power, assassination.

But all that faith and revelation tell us of His divinity rises up against the idea that He can ever have been subjected to temptation. If the torture and the end of His body had really terrified Him, was there not yet time to save Himself? For many days He had known that they were trying to take Him captive, and even on that night there were ways of escaping the pack of hounds ready to fall upon Him. He would have been safe if, either alone or with His most faithful friends, He had taken the road back to the Jordan, and thence by hidden paths have passed across Perea into the Tetrarchy of Philip, where He had already taken refuge to escape the ill-will of Antipas. The Jewish police were so few and primitive that they could scarcely have found Him. The fact that He did not do this, did not flee, shows that He did not try to escape death and the horrors that were to accompany it. From the point of view of our coarse human logic His death was a suicide—a divine suicide by the hand of others, not unlike that of the heroes of antiquity who fell upon the sword of a friend or a slave. What sort of a life would He have had after such a flight? To grow old obscurely, the timorous master of a hidden sect, to die at the last, worn out, the death-rattle in His throat like any other man! Better, infinitely better to finish the sowing of the Gospel on the Cross and to water it with His blood. He had spoken out His truths and now, that those truths should be everlastingly remembered He must needs link with them the horror of His unforgettable death. Perhaps this blood, like a stinging drink, would arouse His disciples forever.

But if the cup that Jesus wished to pass from Him was not fear of death, what else could it have been? Betrayal by him whom He had chosen and loved, by the disciple whose hunger He had fed that very evening with His body, whose thirst He had quenched with His soul? Or the denial close at hand of the other disciple in whom after his cry at Cæsarea He had the greatest hope? Or the desertion of all the others who would flee like scattered lambs when the wolf sets his fangs into their mother's body? Or was it grief for that greater denial, the refusal of His own people, the Jews, of the people from whom He was born and who now despised Him like one born out of His time, and suppressed Him like a child of shame, and did not know that the blood of Him who came to save them would never be wiped from their foreheads? Perhaps in the darkness of this last vigil He had a glimpse of the fate which would befall His children later on, the bewilderment of the first saints, the dissensions between them, the desertions, the martyrdoms, the massacres, and after the hour of triumph the weakness of those who should have guided the multitude, the irrepressible schisms, the dismemberment of the Church, the wild dreaming of heretical pride, the growth of innumerable sects, the confusion of false prophets, the boldness of rebellious reformers, the simony and dissoluteness of those who deny Him in their actions while glorifying Him in word and gesture: the persecutions of Christians by Christians, the neglect of the lukewarm and the arrogant, the dominion of new Pharisees and new Scribes, distorting and betraying His teachings, the misunderstanding of His words, when they fall into the hands of the hair-splitters, weighers of the immaterial, separators of the inseparable, who, with learned vanity, eviscerate and cut to pieces the living things they pretend to bring to life.

The cup that Jesus wished to pass from Him might therefore have been not at all any wrong done to Him, but wrongs committed by others, those alive then and close to Him, or those not yet born and far-distant. What He was asking from His Father might have been not His own safety from death, but safety from the evils, which, then and later, were to overwhelm those who claim to believe in Him. The origin of His sadness would have been thus not fear for Himself, but love for others.

But no one will ever know the true meaning of the words cried out by the Son to the Father, in the black loneliness of the Olives. A great French Christian called the story of this night the "Mystery of Jesus." The "Mystery of Judas" is the only human mystery in the Gospels; the prayer of Gethsemane is the most inscrutable, divine mystery of the story of Christ.

BLOOD AND SWEAT

And when He had prayed, He turned back to find the Disciples, who were perhaps waiting for Him to return. But the three had gone to sleep. Crouching on the ground, wrapped as best they could in their cloaks, Peter, James and John, the faithful, the specially chosen, had allowed themselves to be overcome with sleep. The obscure apprehensions, the repeated agitations of those last few days, the oppressive melancholy of the Supper, accompanied by words so grave, by presentiments so sad, had plunged them into that prostration which is more like torpor than sleep. The voice of the Master—who of us has the spiritual acuteness to realize that the accent of that voice in the sinister black silence is speaking also to our own hearts now?—called them: "What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak." Did they hear these words in their sleep? Did they answer, shamefaced, putting their hands to their confused eyes which could not bear even the dim light of the night? What could they answer, startled, only half awake, to the Sleepless One who was to sleep no more?

Jesus went away again, more heavy-hearted than ever. Was the temptation against which He had put them on guard in them alone or also in Him? Was it the temptation to escape? To deny Himself as others were to deny Him? To oppose violence to violence? To pay with the lives of others for His own life, or to beg once more with a more despairing supplication that the peril might be averted from His head?

Jesus was once more alone, more alone than ever, in a solitude complete as infinite desolation. Until that hour He might have thought that there, close at hand, His loved friends were keeping vigil with Him. Now they had reached the limit of their endurance and had deserted Him spiritually before deserting Him bodily.

They had left Him alone; they were not men enough to grant Him the last favor which He asked, they who had received so many. In return for His blood, and His soul, for all His promises, for all His love, He had asked one thing only, that they should not fall asleep. And this small favor had not been granted Him. And yet He was suffering and struggling at that moment for the sake of those who slept. He who gave all was to receive nothing. During that night of refusals His every prayer was denied; both His Father and His fellow-men refused Him.

Satan also had disappeared into the darkness which is his own kingdom, and Christ was alone, utterly alone, alone as men are alone who raise themselves above other men, who suffer in the darkness to bring light to all. Every hero is always the only one awake in a world of sleepers, like the pilot watching over his ship in the solitude of the ocean and of the night, while his companions rest.

Jesus was the most solitary of all these eternally solitary souls. Everything slept about Him. The city slept, its white, shadow-checkered mass sprawling beyond the Kedron; and in all the houses, in all the cities in the world, the blind race of ephemeral men were sleeping. The only ones awake at that hour were perhaps some woman waiting for the call of her lover; perhaps a thief in ambush in the dark, his hand on the hilt of his knife; perhaps a philosopher pondering the problem, "Does God exist?"

But the leaders of the Jews and their guards were not asleep that night. Those who should have defended Jesus, who might at least have consoled Him, those who claimed to love Him and who in their way at times did really love Him, were stretched in sleep. But those who hated Him, who wished to kill Him, did not sleep. Caiaphas was not asleep and the only Disciple awake at that moment was Judas.

Until the arrival of Judas His Master was alone with His death-like sadness. That He might feel less alone He began to pray to His Father, and once more those imploring words rushed to His lips. The effort to keep them back, the conflict which convulsed His whole being—because the divinity which was in Him accepted joyfully what it had willed, while the ruddy clay which clothed it shuddered—this human and superhuman effort brought to Him at last the victory. He was racked with suffering, but He was triumphant; He was utterly spent, but He had conquered.

The spirit had once more overcome the flesh; but from now on His body was merely a trunk which bled and died. The tension of the terrible struggle had done so great a violence to all that was earthly in Him that the sweat stood out on Him, as though He had achieved an impossible task, had endured the unendurable. The sweat poured from all His person; but not merely the natural sweat which runs down the face of the man walking in the sun, or working in the fields or raving in fever. The blood which He had promised to shed for men was shed first on the grass of the garden of Gethsemane. Great drops of blood mixed with sweat fell on the earth as a first offering of His conquered flesh. It was the beginning of liberation, almost a relief to that humanity which was the greatest burden of His expiation.

Then from His lips wet with tears, wet with sweat, wet with blood, arose a new prayer: "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. Not my will, but thine, be done."

Gone now was any trace of cowardly shrinking; the will, that is the individual, abdicated in the obedience which alone can assure the freedom of the universal. He is no longer a man, but Man; the Man one with God, "I wish that which Thou wisheth." From that moment His victory over death is assured, because he who gives himself wholly to the Eternal cannot die. "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

He stood up calmed, and turned back towards His Disciples. His sad reproof had been vain; worn out and exhausted, the three were again sleeping. But this time Jesus did not call them. He had found a consolation greater than any which they could give Him—and He kneeled down once more to repeat to the Father those great words of abnegation, "Not my will, but thine, be done."

God was no longer to be asked to be the servant of man. Up to that time men had asked Him to satisfy their particular wishes in exchange for canticles and offerings. I wish for prosperity, said the man who prayed, for safety, for strength, for flowering fields, for the ruin of my enemies. But now Christ, the Over-turner, has come to transpose the common prayer, "Not what is pleasing to me, but what is pleasing to Thee. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven." Blessedness can only come as a result of perfect harmony between the sovereign will of the Father and the subordinate will of man, as a result of the convergence and identity of those two wills. What if the will of God give me into the hands of the torturers and fastens me like an evil and malignant beast upon two crossed beams of wood? If I believe in the Father as a

Father, I know that He loves me more than I could love myself, and that He knows more than I could know, therefore He can wish only for what is best for me even if that best to human eyes seems the most dreadful evil; and I wish for what the Father wills. If His foolishness is unimaginably more wise than our wisdom, martyrdom given by Him will be incomparably better than any earthly pleasures.

What if the Disciples slept? What if all men slept? Christ was no longer alone. He was content to suffer, content to die. He had found His peace under the hammer-stroke of anguish.

Now He can listen almost longingly for the footsteps of Judas.

For a time He hears only the beating of His own heart, so much calmer than at first, now that the horror is nearer. But after some moments, He hears approaching the sound of cautious shuffling, and there among the bushes which border the road red flickerings of light appear and disappear in the darkness. They are the servants of the assassins who are following Iscariot along the path.

Jesus turns to the Disciples, still asleep, "Behold the hour is come; rise, let us go. Lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand."

The eight other Disciples, sleeping farther away, are already aroused by the noise, but have no time to answer the Master because while He is still speaking the crowd comes up and stops.

THE HOUR OF DARKNESS

It was the rabble who swarmed around the Temple, paid by the Sanhedrin; bunglingly made over for the time being into warriors; sweepers, and door-keepers, the lower parasites of the sanctuary, who had taken up swords in place of brooms and keys. There were many of them, a great multitude, so the Evangelists say, although they knew they were going out against only twelve men, who had only two swords. It is not credible that there were Roman soldiers among them and certainly not "a captain," as John says, an officer over a thousand men. Caiaphas wished to make Christ a prisoner before he presented Him to the procurator, and the few forces at his disposition (the last vestiges of David's army) with the addition of some clients and relatives were enough to carry out the far-from-dangerous capture.

This haphazard mob had come with torches and lanterns almost as if out for an evening celebration. The pallid faces of the disciples, the livid face of Judas seemed to flicker in the red lights. Christ offered His face, stained with blood but more luminous than the lights, to Judas' kiss. "Friend, wherefore art thou come? Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" He knew what Judas came to do, and He knew that this kiss was the first of His tortures and the most unendurable. This kiss was the signal for the guards who did not know the delinquent by sight. "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He: take Him and lead Him away safely," the merchant of blood had told the rough crowd who followed him as they came along the road. But that kiss was at once the first and the most horrible sullying of those lips which had pronounced the most heavenly words ever spoken here in the inferno of our earth. The spitting, the buffeting, the blows of the Jewish rabble and of the Roman soldiers, and the sponge dipped in vinegar, were to be less intolerable than that kiss, the kiss of a mouth which had called Him friend and Master, which had drunk from His cup, which had eaten from His dish.

As soon as the sign was given the boldest came up to their enemy.

"Whom seek ye?"

"Jesus of Nazareth."

"I am he." He had scarcely said "I am he" when the curs fell backward, either at the sound of His tranquil voice or at the light of those divine eyes. But even at such a moment Jesus took thought for His friends "I have told you that I am He, if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way."

At the moment, profiting by the confusion of the guards, Simon, coming suddenly to himself from his sleep and from his panic, laid his hand to a sword and cut off the ear of Malchus, a servant of Caiaphas. Peter on that night was full of contradictory impulses; after the supper he had sworn that no matter what happened he would never leave Jesus; then in the garden he fell asleep and could not keep himself awake; after that, tardily he set himself up as a militant defender; and a little later he was to deny that he had ever known his Master. Simon's untimely and futile action was at once repudiated by Christ: "Put up thy sword into the sheath, for all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword. The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" And He offered His hands to the nearest rogues who made all haste to tie them with the rope which they had brought. While they were busy tying Him, the prisoner accused them of cowardice. "Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves to take me? When I was daily with you in the temple ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour and the power of darkness."

He is the Light of the world, and the powers of darkness seek to extinguish it; but they can obscure it only for a short time, as on a July noon when the sun is suddenly covered by a dark storm-cloud but an hour afterwards shines out again, higher and more majestic than ever. The guards, eager to return triumphantly and to receive their fees, did not trouble to answer; they dragged Him by the rope towards the road to Jerusalem as butchers drag the ox to the slaughter-house. Then, confesses Matthew, ". . . all the disciples forsook him, and fled." Their Master forbade them to defend Him; instead of blasting His enemies the Messiah offered His hands to be bound; the Saviour was powerless to save Himself. What could they do but disappear so that they might not also be brought before those powers which yesterday they had boasted of overthrowing, but which now, in the flickering of the lanterns and the swords, seemed suddenly very formidable to their distracted minds? And only two followed the infamous procession, and they from a safe distance. We shall see them later in the court-yard of Caiaphas' house.

All this bustle awakened a young man who had been sleeping in the house in the grove of olives. Inquisitive like all young men, he did not take the time to dress, but wrapping a sheet about him, stepped out to see what was happening. The guards thought him a disciple who had not had time to escape, and laid hands on him, but the young man, casting off the sheet, left it in their hands and fled from them naked.

No one has ever known the identity of this mysterious man awakened from his sleep, who appeared suddenly in the night, and as suddenly disappeared. Perhaps he was the youthful Mark, the only one of the Evangelists who tells this story. If it were Mark, it is possible that on that night the involuntary witness of the beginning of the Passion first conceived the impulse to become, as Mark did, its first historian.

ANNAS

In a short time the criminal was taken to the house which Annas shared with his son-in-law, the High Priest Caiaphas. Although the night was now well advanced, and although the assembly had been warned the day before, that Caiaphas hoped to capture the blasphemer early in the morning, many of the Jews were still in bed and the prosecution could not begin at once. In order that the common people might not have time to rise in rebellion, nor Pilate to take thought, the leaders were in haste to finish the affair that very morning. Some of the guards who returned from the Mount of Olives were sent to awake the more important Scribes and Elders, and in the meantime old Annas, who had not slept all that night, set himself on his own account to question this false Prophet.

Annas, son of Seth, had been for seven years High Priest, and though deposed in the year 14 under Tiberius, he was still the real primate of the Jewish Church. A Sadducee, head of one of the most aggressive and wealthy families of the ecclesiastical patriarchate, he was still, through his son-in-law, leader of his caste. Five of his sons were afterwards High Priests, and one of them, also called Annas, caused James, the brother of the Lord, to be stoned to death.

Jesus was led before him. It was the first time that the wood-worker of Nazareth found Himself face to face with the religious head of His people, with His greatest enemy. Up to that time He had met only the subalterns in the Temple, the common soldiers, the Scribes and Pharisees; now He was before the head, and He was no longer the accuser but the accused. This was the first questioning of that day. In the space of a few hours, four authorities examined Him; two rulers from the Temple, Annas and Caiaphas; and two temporal rulers, Antipas and Pilate.

The first question Annas put to Jesus was to ask Him who His disciples were. The old political priest who like all the other Sadducees gave no credence to the foolish stories about the coming of a Messiah, wished to know first of all who were the followers of the new Prophet, and from what rank of society He had picked them up, so that he might determine how far the seditious ulcer had progressed. But Jesus looked at Him without answering. How could that dove-huckster have thought that Jesus could betray those who had betrayed Him?

Then Annas asked about His doctrine. Jesus answered that it was not for Him to explain: "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said."

This was the truth. Jesus was not esoteric. Even if He sometimes said to His Disciples words that He did not repeat in the open places of the city, He exhorted them to cry out on the housetops what He told them in the house. But Annas must have made a wry face at an answer which pre-supposed an honest trial, for one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, "Answerest thou the high priest so?"

This blow from the quick-tempered attendant was the beginning of the insults which were henceforth rained upon Christ up to the cross. But He who had been struck, with His cheek reddened by the boor, turned towards the man who had struck Him, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?"

The rogue, abashed by such calm, found no answer. Annas began to see that this Galilean was no common adventurer, and he was all the more eager to get Him out of the way. Seeing, however, that he was not succeeding in extracting anything from Him, he sent Him bound to Caiaphas, the High Priest, so that the fiction of a legal prosecution might begin at once.

THE COCK CROWS

Only two of the fleeing Disciples repented of their cowardice, and trembling in the shadow of the walls, followed from afar the swaying lanterns which accompanied Christ to the den of fratricides: Simon, son of Jonas, and John, son of Zebedee.

John, who was known in the household of Caiaphas, went into the courtyard of the building with Jesus, but Simon, more shamefaced, or not so bold, did not enter and stood at the door without: then after a few moments John, not seeing his companion, and wishing to have him at hand for sympathy or defense, went out and persuaded the suspicious doorkeeper to let Peter also come in. But as he stepped through the door, the woman recognized him: "Art not thou also one of his disciples?"

But Peter took on an offended air, "I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. I know him not."

And he sat down with John near the brazier which the servants had kindled in the courtyard because, although it was in April, the night was cold. But the woman would not give up her idea, and coming to the fire and looking at him earnestly, said, "Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth," and he denied again with curses, "Woman, I know him not!"

The gate-keeper, shaking her head, turned back to her gate, but the men aroused by these heated denials looked at him more closely and said, "Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto."

Then Simon began to curse and to swear, but another, a kinsman of Malchus whose ear Peter had cut off, cut short his testimony: "Did I not see thee in the garden with him?"

But Peter, now hopelessly involved in lies, began again to protest that they had mistaken him for another and that he was not one of the friends of the Man.

At this very moment Jesus, bound among the guards, crossed the courtyard after His colloquy with Annas, passing to the other part of the palace, where Caiaphas lived: and He heard the words of Simon and looked at Him. For just one moment He turned His eyes upon Simon, those eyes where Simon, denying Him now, had once recognized the gleam of divinity. For an instant only He looked at him with eyes whose gentleness was more unendurable than any contempt. And this look pierced for all time the pitiable, distracted heart of the fisherman. To the day of his death he could never forget those sad, mild eyes fixed on him in that terrible night; those eyes which in one flash expressed more and moved him more than a thousand words.

"Thou also who wast the first, of whom I hoped most, the hardest but the most zealous, the most ignorant but the most fervent, thou also, Simon, the same who cried out my true name near Cæsarea, thou also who knowest all my words and hast slept with thy head on my cloak and hast kissed me so many times with those lips which now deny me, thou also, Simon Peter, son of Jonas, deny me before those who are about to kill me! I was right that day when I called thee a stumbling block and reproached thee with thinking not like God but like men. Thou mightest at least have fled away as the others did if thou hadst not the strength to drink with me the cup of infamy which I had foretold to thee. Flee away now that I may see thee no more until the day when I shall be truly free and thou shalt be truly made over by faith. If thou fearest for thy life why art thou here? If thou fearest not, why dost thou deny me? Even Judas at the last has been more faithful than thou: he came with my enemies, but he did not deny that he knew me. Simon, Simon, I foretold that thou wouldst leave me like the others, but now thou art more cruel than the others. I have pardoned thee from my heart. I am about to die, and I pardon him who brings me to death, and thee also; and I love thee as I have always loved thee, but canst thou forgive thyself?"

Under the weight of this look, Simon hung his head and his heart beat furiously in his breast. Not for his very life could he have brought out another "No." His face burned with an intolerable heat as if the brazier before him had been the mouth of Hell. He was torn by an unbearable tumult of passion and of remorse; in one breath he seemed frozen, in the next all his body flamed. A moment before he had said that he had never known Jesus, and now it seemed to him that he had spoken truly, that at this moment he knew Him for the first time: that he finally understood who He was, as if those eyes full of loving grief had pierced him with a flash like an archangel's sword.

He was scarcely able to drag himself to his feet and to stumble out to the door. As he went out into the street in the silent, solitary darkness a distant cock crew. This gay, bold note was for Peter like the cry which awakens a sleeper from his nightmare. Then in the dim light of dawn the last stars saw a man staggering along like a drunkard, his head hidden in his cloak, his shoulders shaken by the sobs of a despairing lament.

Weep, Peter, now that God mercifully grants you the grace of tears, weep for yourself and for Him, weep for Judas, your traitor brother; weep for your fleeing brothers, weep for the death of Him who is dying to save your poor soul, for all those who will come after you and who will do as you have done, deny their Saviour, and who will not pay for their redemption by repentance. Weep for all the apostates, for all the others who will deny Him, all those who will say as you have said, "I am not one of His disciples!" Who of us has not done at least once what Simon Peter did? Who of us, born in the Church of Christ, having prayed to Him with our childish lips, having knelt before His blood-stained face, has not said, fearing a mocking smile, "I never knew Him."

Thou at least, unfortunate Simon, although thou wast Peter the rock, wept bitterly and hid in thy cloak thy face convulsed with remorse. And before many days Christ risen from the dead will kiss thee once more because thy perjured mouth has been washed clean forever by thy tears.

THEN THE HIGH PRIEST RENT HIS CLOTHES

Caiaphas' real name was Joseph. Caiaphas is a surname and is the same word as Cephas, Simon's surname, that is to say, Rock. On that Friday morning's dawn, the Son of Man was caught between those two rocks like a grain of wheat between two millstones. Simon Peter is the type of the timid friends who knew not how to save Him: Joseph Peter, of His enemies, determined at any cost to destroy Him. Between the denial of Simon and the hatred of Joseph, between the head of the church about to disappear and the head of the Church just coming into existence, between those two rocks Jesus was like wheat between the mill-stones.

The Sanhedrin had already come together and was awaiting Him. Together with Annas and Caiaphas who presided, there were John, Alexander, and all the reeking scum of the upper classes. As a rule the Sanhedrin was composed of twenty-three priests, twenty-three Scribes, twenty-three Elders, and two Presidents, in all, seventy-one. But on this occasion some were absent, those who had more fear of an uprising of the people than hatred for the blasphemer, and those few who would not lift a finger to condemn Him, but would not defend Him openly: among these last were certainly Nicodemus, the nocturnal disciple, and Joseph of Arimathea, who was devoutly to lay Jesus in His tomb.

They had come together to ratify with a cloak of legality the decree of murder already written on their hearts. These delegates from the Temple, from the School and the Bank, burned with impatience to confirm, each for his own reasons, their revengeful sentence. The great room of the council already full of people was like a den of werewolves. The new day showed itself hesitatingly: the orange-colored tongues of the torches were scarcely visible in the dim light of dawn. In this sinister half-shadow the Jews were waiting: aged, portly, hook-nosed, harsh, beetle-browed, wrapped in their white cloaks, their heads covered, stroking their venerable beards, with choleric eyes, seated in a half circle, they seemed a council of sorcerers awaiting a living offering. The rest of the hall was occupied by the clients of the seated assembly, by guards with staves in their hands, by the domestic servants of the house. The air was heavy and dense as in a charnel house.

Jesus, His wrists still tied with ropes, was thrust into the midst of this kennel like a condemned man thrown to the beasts of the Imperial amphitheater. Annas had gathered together in all haste from among the rabble some false witnesses to make an end of any discussion or defense. The pretense of a trial began with calling these perjurers. Two of them came forward and swore that they had heard these words: "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands."

At the time and for those hearers this accusation was a very grave one, meaning nothing less than sacrilege and blasphemy. For in the minds of its upholders the Temple of Jerusalem was the one intangible home of the Lord. And to threaten the Temple was to threaten their real Master, the Master of all the Jews. But Jesus had never said these words or at least not in this form, nor with this meaning. It is true that He had announced that of the Temple not one stone would remain upon another, but not through any action of His. And the reference to the Temple not made with hands, built up in three days, was part of another discourse in which He had spoken figuratively of His resurrection. The false witnesses could not even agree about these words confusedly and maliciously repeated, and one statement from Jesus would have been enough to confound them utterly. But Jesus held His peace.

The High Priest could not endure this silence, and standing up, cried out, "Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?"

But Jesus answered nothing.

These silences of Jesus were so weighty with magnetic eloquence that they enraged His judges. He held His peace at the first questioning of Annas. He was silent now at the outcry of Caiaphas and He was to be silent with Antipas and Pilate.

He had made already, a thousand times, the statements He might have made now, and any other answers He might have made would either have been misunderstood by His judges, or have been used by them as new pretexts for attacking Him. Superhuman truths are in their very nature ineffable, and only a shadow of them can be grasped, through a loving effort by those who already have a faint divination of that shadow; and even to them this comes more through the heart than through faulty and defective words.

Jesus did not speak, but looked about Him with His great calm eyes, at the troubled and convulsed faces of His assassins, and for all eternity judged these phantom judges. In a flash every one of them was weighed and condemned by that look which went straight to the soul. Were they worthy to hear His words, those flawed, self-seeking souls, empty and inane, those of them that are not ulcerous and moribund? How could He ever, by the most unthinkable prodigy, stoop to justify Himself before them?

Such self-justification was attempted by the son of the midwife, the flat-nosed student and rival of the Sophists! The seventy-year-old arguer, who for so many years had bored the artisans and the idlers on the market-place, was capable of reciting to the judges of Athens an eloquent and carefully arranged oration of excuses, which, from the limits of dialectics, descended little by little to the sophistries of law courts. It is true that the ironical old man who had set himself to reform the art of thinking rather than the art of living, who had not been above usury, who, not having his fill with Xantippe, had had two children by his concubine Myra, and who amused himself with caressing handsome young men more than was becoming for the father of a family, was ready to die, and knew how to die with noble firmness; but at the bottom of his heart he would have preferred to descend into Hades by the more natural road. Towards the end of his specious defense, he tried to placate his judges by recalling his old age to them. "It is useless to kill me because I will die very soon anyhow" —and offered to pay thirty greater minæ if they would let him go in peace.

But Christ was neither a sophist nor a lawyer, Christ whom so many posthumous Pilates have tried to belittle by comparing Him to Socrates, so inferior to Him. Like Dante's angel, He disdained human discussions. He answered with silence, or if He was forced to speak, spoke candidly and briefly. Caiaphas, exasperated by this disrespectful taciturnity, finally hit on a way to make him speak. "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God."

As long as they conducted His trial with the usual insidious procedure, adducing falsities or asking Him about perfectly well-known truths, Jesus said no word; but even in the infamous mouth of the High Priest, the invocation to the living God was irresistible. Jesus could not deny Himself to the living God, to the God who will live eternally, and who lives in all of us, and who was present there even in that lair of demons. And yet He hesitated a moment before dazzling those bleared eyes with the splendor of His formidable secret.

"If I tell you, ye will not believe: And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me."

Now Caiaphas was not alone in putting the question; all of them, excited, sprang to their feet and cried out, their clawing fingers stretched towards Him, "Art thou then the Son of God?"

Jesus could not, like Peter, deny the irrefutable certainty which was the reason for His life and for His death. He was responsible towards His own people and towards all men. But, as at Cæsarea, He wished others to be the ones to pronounce His real name, and when they had said it He did not refuse it, even though death were the penalty.

"Ye say that I am. I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

He had condemned Himself out of His own mouth. The snarling pack about Him was frothing at the mouth with delight and anger. In the presence of His assassins He had proclaimed what He had secretly admitted to His most loving friends. Although they might betray Him, He had not betrayed Himself or His father. Now He was ready for the last degradation. He had said what He had to say.

Caiaphas was triumphant. Pretending a shocked horror which he did not feel—because like all the Sadducees he had no faith whatever in the apocalyptic writers and cared about nothing but the fees and honors of the Temple—he rent his priestly garments, crying out, "He hath spoken blasphemy! What further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye?"

And all the noisy kennel bayed out their answer, "He is guilty of death."

And without any further examination, without a single protest, they all condemned Him to death as a blasphemer and false prophet.

The comedy of legal pretense was played to an end, and the cloaked ghosts felt themselves relieved of an immense weight. It had cost the High Priest a garment and he let the torn pieces hang like glorious symbols of victorious battle. He did not know that on that very day a garment more precious than any of his was to be torn, and he did not dream that his gesture was a symbolic recognition of another death-sentence. The priesthood of which he was the head was henceforth disqualified and abolished forever. His successors were to be mere semblances of priests, spurious and illegitimate, and in a few years the sumptuous garment of marble and masonry of the Jewish sanctuary was to be rent by the Roman rabble.

AND WHEN THEY HAD BLINDFOLDED HIM

When the tragi-comedy acted by the masters had ended in a death-sentence, the devils' band of subalterns had their turn. While the high officials went apart to take counsel on the manner of securing the ratification from the Procurator and executing the death sentence with all speed, Jesus was thrown as prey to the rabble in the Palace, as the offal of the slain animal is thrown to the pack which has taken part in the hunt. The ruffians who lived upon the leavings of the Temple felt that they had as their perquisite the right to some amusement. Man, the beast, when he is certain of impunity, knows no more pleasing recreation than to wreak himself upon the defenseless, especially if the defenseless is innocent. Our bestial nature, crouching untamed at the bottom of every human heart, rushes out bold and snarling; the face becomes a muzzle, teeth are tusks, hands appear what they really are, claws, the articulate sounds of human speech vanish in snarlings and growlings. If a drop of blood reddens to the view, they jostle each other to lick it up: there is no more intoxicating liquor than blood: it is far more stimulating than wine, and far fairer to see, red as it is, than the water of Pilate.

But tigerishness breaking loose readily takes the form of play; even tigers are sportive, even children, as soon as they begin to grow strong at all, are tigerish. The captors of Christ, waiting for foreign authority to confirm the death sentence of the most innocent of their brothers, meant to give Christ a humorous foretaste of His sufferings. They had permission to jest with their King, to divert themselves with their God. And they felt that they really deserved some amusement; they had been awake all night long, and the night had been cold: and then the march up to the Mount of Olives, fearing resistance, a well-grounded fear, since one of them had had his ear stricken off; and then the long wait, till dawn, a very tiring business especially on those festal days when the city and the Temple were full of foreigners and there was so much more for every one to do.

But they did not know how to begin. He was tied and his friends had disappeared. But this man who looked at them with an expression they had never seen till then, with a steady look which seemed beyond all earthly things and yet searched them out within like a ray of troublesome sunshine—this man, bound, exhausted, the fresh sweat on His face softening the drops of dried blood on His cheeks, this insignificant man, this defenseless provincial with no protecting patrons, condemned to death by the highest and holiest tribunal of the Jewish people, this human rubbish destined to the cross of slaves and thieves, this laughingstock whom the authorities had given over to their abuse like a puppet at the saturnalia, this man who did not speak nor complain nor weep, but who looked on them as if He had compassion on them, as a father might look at his sick child, as a friend might look at a delirious friend, this man, mocked by all, inspired in their worthless souls a mysterious reverence.

But one of the Scribes or the Elders gave the example, and spat at Jesus as he passed by Him. He was too careful of His ritual cleanliness to contaminate His newly washed hands, ready for the Passover, by touching an enemy of God, who, near to death, was already impure like a corpse. But saliva: what is saliva? Refuse of the body, contempt materialized in a liquid.

And on that face illumined by the early morning sun and by imprisoned divinity, on that face transfigured by the light of the sun and by love's light, on the golden face of Christ, the spittle of the Jews covered the first blood of the Passion. But for the rabble of the servants and the guards spitting was not enough, nor were they afraid of sullying their hands. The example of the leaders had overcome the impression made on them by the condemned man's sad and brotherly look. The guards who were nearest Him struck Him in the face; those who could not strike His face rained down blows and threats, and the words which came from the mouths of those insensate men wounded Him more cruelly than blows.

That face, which had been white as a hawthorn blossom and shining like sunlight, darkened into the livid purple of beaten flesh. The fair, gracious body, reeling with blows, staggered in the midst of the heaving crowd. Christ said no word to those who vomited out on Him the appalling contents of their souls. He had answered the guard who had struck Him in the presence of Annas, asking him to correct Him if He had spoken ill; for this ribald mob let loose He had no answer. But one of them more quick-witted or more childish than the others had an idea: he took a dirty cloth and with it covered the bleeding, buffeted face, tying the corners behind. And he said: "Let us play blind man's buff. This man boasts of being a prophet; let us see if he can guess which of us is striking him."

Christ's face was covered. Was there, in the action of the ruffians, an unconsciously compassionate desire to spare Him, at least, the sight of His brothers become like beasts? Or was that look of suffering love really unendurable to them? With childish cruelty, they arranged themselves in a circle about Him and first one and then another twitched a fold of His garment, gave Him a blow on the shoulder, thrust Him in the back, struck Him with a staff over the head: "Prophesy! Who is it that smote thee?"

Why did He not answer? Had He not predicted the ruin of the Temple, wars and earthquakes, the coming of the Son of Man on clouds and many other idle stories? How was it that now He could not make such an easy guess, give the name of a person so close at hand? What sort of a prophet was this? Had he lost His power all at once, or had He never had it? He might be able to make those poor countrified Galileans believe His stories, but here we are in Jerusalem, the city which understands prophets and kills them when they do not show a proper spirit. Luke adds, "And many other things blasphemously spake they against him."

But Caiaphas and the others were in haste and thought that the servile pack had amused itself long enough. The false king must be taken to Pilate that his sentence be confirmed: the Sanhedrin could pronounce judgment, but since Judea was under Roman rule, it had no longer, unfortunately, the Jus Gladii. And the High Priests, Scribes and Elders, set out for the Palace of the Procurator, followed by the guards leading Jesus with ropes, and by the yelling horde which grew larger as they went along the street.

PONTIUS PILATE

Since A. D. 26, Pontius Pilate had been Procurator in the name of Tiberius Cæsar. Historians know nothing of him before his arrival in Judea. If the name comes from Pileatus it may be supposed that he was a freedman or descendant of freedmen, since the Pileo, or skull cap, was the head gear of freed slaves.

He had been in Judea only a few years, but long enough to draw upon himself the bitterest hate of those over whom he ruled. It is true that all our information about him comes from Jews and Christians, who were, of course, his declared enemies; but it appears that he finally lost favor even with his masters, since in A. D. 36 the Governor of Syria, Lucius Vitellius, sent him to Rome to justify himself before Tiberius. The Emperor died before Pilate arrived in the metropolis, but according to tradition, he was exiled by Caligula, exiled into Gaul, where he killed himself.

In the first place the hatred of the Jews came from the profound scorn which he showed from the start for this stiff-necked, indocile people, who must have seemed to him, brought up in Roman ideas, like a snake pit of venomous serpents—a low, dirty crowd, scarcely worthy to be tamed by the cudgels of the mercenaries. To have an idea of Pilate's personality, make a mental picture of an English Viceroy of India, a subscriber to the *Times*, a reader of John Stuart Mill and Shaw—with Byron and Swinburne on his bookshelves—destined to administer the government over a ragged, captious, hungry and turbulent people, wrangling among themselves over a confusion of castes and mythologies and superstitions for which their ruler feels in his heart the profoundest aversion, looking down on them from the height of his dignity as a white man, a European, a Briton and a Liberal. Pilate, as shown by his questions put to Jesus, was one of those skeptics of the Roman decadence corrupted with Pyrrhonism, a devotee of Epicurus, an encyclopedist of Hellenism without any belief in the gods of his country, nor any belief that any real God existed at all. The idea certainly can never have occurred to Pilate that the true God could be found in this vermin-ridden, superstitious mob, in the midst of this factious and jealous clergy, in this religion which must have seemed to him like a barbarous mixture of Syrian and Chaldean oracles. The only faith remaining to him, or which he needed to pretend to hold because of his office, was the new Roman religion, civic and political, concentrated on the cult of the Emperor. The first conflict with the Jews arose in fact from this religion. When he had changed the guard of Jerusalem, he ordered the soldiers to enter the city by night, without taking off from their ensigns the silver images of Cæsar. In the morning, as soon as the Jews were aware of this, great was the horror and the uproar. It was the first time that the Romans had lacked in external respect for the religion of their subjects in Palestine. These figures of the deified Cæsar planted near the Temple were for them an idolatrous provocation, the beginning of the abomination of desolation. All the country was in an uproar; a deputation was sent to Cæsarea to have Pilate take them away. Pilate refused; for five days and nights they stormed about him day and night. Finally the Procurator, to get himself out of the trouble, convoked them in the amphitheater and treacherously had them surrounded with soldiers with naked swords, assuring them that no one would escape if they did not make an end of their clamor. But the Jews, instead of asking for mercy, offered their throats to the swords, and Pilate, conquered by this heroic stubbornness, ordered that the insignia be carried back to Cæsarea.

But if this clemency did not diminish the hatred of the Jews for the new Procurator, neither did it lessen Pilate's distaste nor his desire to do them an ill turn. A little while after this, he introduced into Herod's palace, where he lived when he stayed at Jerusalem, votive tablets dedicated to the Emperor. But the priests heard of it and once more the people were aroused to outraged and furious anger. He was asked to take away the idolatrous objects at once. An appeal to Cæsar was threatened, an appeal supported by evidence of the impositions and cruelties committed by Pilate. Pilate this time also did not yield. The Jews then made the appeal to Tiberius, who decreed that the tablets should be sent back to Cæsarea.

Twice Pilate had had the worst of a dispute. But the third time he was triumphant. Coming from the city of public baths and aqueducts, a friend, as is well known, of ablutions, he noticed that Jerusalem lacked water and he planned to have a fine large reservoir constructed and an aqueduct several miles long. But the undertaking was expensive and to pay for it he used a goodly sum taken from the treasury of the Temple. The treasury was rich, for all the Jews scattered about in the Empire came there to bring offerings, and when they could not come in person sent them from a distance—but the priests cried out on the sacrilege, and the people incited by them made such a commotion that when Pilate came for the Feast of the Passover to Jerusalem, thousands of men gathered in a tumultuous crowd in front of his Palace. But this time he sent among the multitude a large number of disguised soldiers who at a given signal began to lay about them so vigorously, among the most furious of the crowd, that in a short time they all fled away, and Pilate could enjoy in peace the water of the reservoir paid for with the Jews' money, and make use of it for his various ablutions.

Only a short time had passed since this last encounter and now these very priests who three times had risen against his authority, the very ones who had tried to obtain his deposition, the very ones who hated him heartily, hated him as a Roman, as a symbol of the foreign dominion and of their slavery, and hated him still more personally as Pontius Pilate, as plotter against their religion and thief of their money—these very High Priests were forced to have recourse to him in order to vent another hatred, which for the moment was more bitter in their wicked hearts. Only hard necessity drove them to it, because death sentences could not be carried out if they were not confirmed by Cæsar's representative.

That Friday, at dawn, Pontius Pilate, wrapped in his toga, still sleepy and yawning, was waiting for them in Herod's palace, very ill-disposed towards those tiresome trouble-makers, whose contentions had forced him to rise earlier than usual.

WHAT IS TRUTH?

The crowd of the accusers and of the rough populace finally came out into the open place which was before Herod's palace, but they stopped outside, because if they went into a house where there was leaven and bread baked with leaven, they would be contaminated all day long and could not eat the Passover. Innocent blood does not pollute, but leaven does.

Pilate, warned of their coming, went out on the door-sill and asked abruptly: "What accusation bring ye against this man?"

Those who were before him were his enemies. It appeared that this man was their enemy and Pilate instinctively took his part. Not that he had any pity for him—was he not a Jew like the others, and poor into the bargain? But if he were by any chance innocent, Pilate had no mind to lend himself to a whim of those detestable vermin.

Caiaphas answered at once as if offended: "If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto you."

Then Pilate who wished to lose no time with ecclesiastical squabbles, and did not think that there was any question of a capital crime, answered dryly: "Take ye him, and judge him according to your law."

Already in these words appears his wish to save the man without being forced to take sides openly. But the concession of the Procurator, which in any other case would have delighted Caiaphas and his party, this time did not suit them, because the Sanhedrin could inflict only light sentences and now they desired the most extreme sentence of all and could not dispense with the Roman arm. They answered: "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death."

Pilate suddenly understood what sentence they wished passed on the wretched man who stood before him, and he wished to find out what crime He had committed. What might seem worthy of a death sentence to those bigoted rabbis might seem a venial fault in the eyes of a Roman.

The foxes of the Temple had thought of this difficulty before taking action. They knew very well that Pilate would not be satisfied if they told him that this man attacked the religion of their fathers and announced the Kingdom of God. They were prepared therefore to lie. For a man about to commit a base action, one more accessory and subordinate infamy seems of little consequence. Pilate could be conquered only with his own weapons, by appealing to his loyalty to Rome and to the Emperor and to the basis of his office-holding. It was already agreed that they would give a political color to the accusation. If they told him that Jesus was a false Messiah, Pilate would smile. But if they said that He was a seditious inciter of revolt, that He was trying to rouse the common people against Rome, Pilate could not do less than put Him to death.

"We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ, a King. . . . He stirreth up all the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place."

Every word was a lie. Jesus had commanded men to render unto Cæsar that which was Cæsar's. He paid no attention whatever to the Romans. He said that He was Christ but not in the coarse, political meaning of a King of the Jews: and He did not stir up the people but wished to make of an unhappy and degraded people a blessed kingdom of saints. However grave these accusations might have seemed to Pilate if they had been true, they only increased his suspicions of the priests. Was it probable that those treacherous vipers who detested him and Rome, and who had tried to overturn him so many times and whose one dream was to sweep away the governing pagans and foreigners, should suddenly be kindled with so much zeal to denounce a rebel of their own nation?

Pilate was not convinced and he wished to find out for himself, by questioning the accused man in private. He went back into the palace and commanded that Jesus be brought to him. Disregarding the less important accusations, he went at once to the essential: "Art thou the King of the Jews?"

But Jesus did not answer. How could He ever make this Roman understand! This Roman who knew nothing of God's promises, misinformed by His assassins, a Pyrrhonic atheist, whose only religion was the artificial and diabolical cult of a living man—and of what a man—Tiberius!—how could He ever explain to this freedman, a pupil of the lawyers and rhetoricians of Rome in the most decadent of all the degenerate foulness of that time; how could He explain that He was the King of a Kingdom not yet founded, of a spiritual Kingdom which would abolish all human kingdoms?

Jesus read the depths of Pilate's soul and made no answer, as He had kept silent at first before Annas and before Caiaphas. The Procurator could not understand this silence on the part of a man over whom hung the threat of death. "Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?"

But Jesus answered him never a word. Pilate, who at all costs wished to triumph over those who hated him as much as they hated this man, insisted, hoping to extract a denial which would permit him to set Him at liberty: "Art thou the King of the Jews?"

If Jesus denied this He would betray Himself. He had said to His disciples and to the Jews that He was Christ. He had no wish to lie and save Himself. The better to sound the Roman's mind He answered Him, as was his wont, with another question: "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?"

Pilate answered, as if offended, "Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me. Art thou the King of the Jews?"

With the exception of this contemptuous beginning, this answer of Pilate was conciliatory. "For whom do you take me? Do you not know that I am a Roman, that I do not believe what your enemies believe? Your accusers are priests, not I; but they are obliged to give you into my hands: your safety rests with me: tell me that what they say is not true and you shall be free."

Jesus had no wish to escape death, but still He determined to try to shed more light on this pagan. Everything is possible to the Father: was it not possible that Pilate might be the last convert of the dying man?

"My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

The servant of Tiberius did not understand. The difference between "of this world" and "my kingdom is not from hence" was obscure to him. Pilate thought that what is the phrase "not of this world" meant the gods above if there were really any, gods favorable or malignant to men, and below in Hades the shadows of the dead if really there was anything remaining of us when the body had been consumed by fire or worms: the only reality for such a man as Pilate was "this world," the great world with all its kingdoms. And once more he asked: "Art thou a king then?"

There was no longer any reason to deny. He would say to this blinded man what He had proclaimed to the others: "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

Then Pilate, annoyed by what seemed to him truculent mystification, answered with the celebrated question: "What is truth?"

And without waiting for an answer, he rose to go out The skeptical Roman had many times been present at the endless disputes of philosophers, and because he had heard so many contradictory metaphysical contentions and so many sophistical quibblings, had become convinced that truth did not exist, or if it did exist, could never be known by men. He did not dream for a moment that this obscure Jew who stood before him as a malefactor could tell him the truth. It was Pilate's destiny on that one day of his life to contemplate the face of truth, supreme truth made man, and he could not see it. Living truth, the truth which could have made him a new man, was before him clothed with human flesh and rough garments, with buffeted face, and hands tied. But in his arrogance he did not guess what prodigious good fortune was his, a good fortune which millions of men have envied him after his death. If any one had told him that because of this one encounter, because to him was vouchsafed the overwhelming honor of having spoken to Jesus and having sent Him to the cross, his name would be known, although in infamy and malediction, through all the centuries and by all the human race, such a prophecy would have seemed to him like the frenzied ravings of a madman. Pilate was blind with an appalling and incurable blindness, but Christ on that very day was to pardon even him because the blind, even less than others, know what they do.

CLAUDIA PROCULA

Just as Pilate was preparing to go out and give his answer to the Jews, who were muttering restlessly and impatiently before the door, a servant sent by his wife came up to him, giving him this message: "Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him."

No one in the four Gospels tells us what impression was made on the Procurator by this unexpected intercession from his wife. We know nothing of her except her name. According to the Gospel of Nicodemus her name was Claudia Procula, and if this name was really hers she may have belonged to the Gente Claudia, distinguished and powerful at Rome. We may thus suppose that she was by birth and connections of a higher social rank than her husband, and that Pilate, a mere freedman, may have owed to her and her influence in Rome his post in Judea.

If all this was true, certainly the request of Claudia Procula must have made some impression on Pilate, especially if he loved her; and that he loved her, at least as a man of his nature could love, seems proved by the fact that he had asked to take her with him into Asia. The Lex Oppia, although mitigated by a decree of the Senate in the consulship of Cethegus and Varro, forbade the pro-consuls to take their wives with them, and Pontius Pilate had a special permit from Tiberius allowing Claudia Procula to accompany him to Palestine.

The motives for this intercession, so briefly stated, are mysterious. The words of Matthew refer to a dream in which she had suffered because of Jesus: it is probable that she had heard people talking for some time of the new Prophet; perhaps she had seen Him, and found Him very different from the other Jews. The fact that He was neither a vulgar demagogue nor a hypocritical Pharisee must have been pleasing to the imagination of a fanciful Roman woman. She did not understand the language spoken in Jerusalem, but some interpreter of the law courts might have repeated to her some of Jesus' words, words which would have convinced her that He was not, as they said, a dangerous criminal.

In those days the Romans, especially Roman women, were beginning to feel the attraction of Oriental myths and cults, which gave more satisfaction to the longing for personal immortality than the old Latin religion, a cold, legal, businesslike exchange of sacrifices to obtain utilitarian and political ends. Many patrician women, even in Rome, had been initiated into the mysteries of Mithra, Osiris and of Isis, the Great Mother, and some showed a certain leaning towards Judaism. In that very reign of Tiberius many Jews living in Rome were exiled from the Capital because, according to Josephus, some of them had deceived a matron Fulvia—converted to Judaism—and Fulvia, as we see from a reference of Suetonius, was not the only one.

It is not impossible that Claudia Procula, living in Judea, had been curious to know more in detail about the religion of the people governed by her husband, and that, curious like all women about new things, she had tried to find out what new doctrines were being preached by the Galilean prophet of whom every one in Jerusalem was talking. It is certain that she had become convinced that Jesus was a "just man" and hence innocent. The dream of that night, the terrible dream—for she had "suffered many things" in it—had confirmed her in this conviction, and it is not surprising that relying on the influence which women have with their husbands, even if their husbands love them no longer, she sent this imploring message to Pilate.

It is enough for us that she called Him "That just man"—the man whom the Jews wished to assassinate. Together with the Centurion of Capernaum and with the Canaanite woman, Claudia Procula is the first pagan who believed in Christ, and the Greek Church has good reason to revere her as a Saint.

This message from his wife strengthened Pilate's reluctance, inclined as he already was to neutrality, if not to clemency, through his animosity to Caiaphas, and perhaps through the words of the Accused. Claudia Procula had not said, "Save Him"—but: "Have thou nothing to do with that just man." This was Pilate's idea, also; as if he had a confused divination of the importance of this mysterious beggar who called Himself King. At the very first he had ordered the Jews to judge Him, themselves, but they had not been willing to do this. Then another way to evade the responsibility occurred to him. He went back to Jesus and asked whether He were a Galilean.

This evasion seemed to promise success. Jesus did not belong to his jurisdiction, but to that of Herod Antipas. By good luck Herod was there at Jerusalem at that very time, come as was his wont for the Passover. The Procurator had found a legitimate subterfuge to satisfy his wife—and to free himself from this troublesome perplexity. With one stroke he would ingratiate himself with the Jews, leaving to one of their own race the decisive judgment, and at the same time he would do a bad turn to the patriarch whom he hated with all his heart because he suspected him with good reason of spying on him and tale-bearing to Tiberius. So, losing no time, he ordered the soldiers to take Jesus before Herod.

THE WHITE CLOAK

The third judge before whom Jesus was led was a son of that bloody-minded hog, Herod the Great, by one of his five wives. He was the true son of his father because he wronged his brothers as his father had wronged his sons. When his brother Archelaus, his own half-brother, was accused by his subjects, he managed to have him exiled. He robbed his other brother Herod of his wife. When he was seventeen years old he began to reign as Tetrarch over Galilee and over Berea, and to ingratiate himself with Tiberius, offered himself as a secret tale-bearer of the sayings and doings of his brothers and of the Roman officials in Judea. On a voyage to Rome he fell in love with Herodias, who was both his niece and his sister-in-law, since she was the daughter of his brother Aristobulus, and wife of his brother Herod, and not shrinking from the double incest, he persuaded her to follow him, together with Salome, the daughter of the adulteress. His first wife, daughter of Aretas, king of the Nabatei, went back to her father, who declared war on Antipas and defeated him.

This happened while John the Baptist was beginning to be talked about among the people. The prophet let slip some words of condemnation against these two incestuous adulterers, and this was enough for Herodias to persuade her new husband to have him taken and shut up in the fortress of Machærus. Every one knows how the foul Tetrarch, inflamed by cruel Salome's lascivious arts, and perhaps meditating a new incest, was forced to offer her the bearded head of the Prophet of Fire on a golden platter.

But even after his decapitation John's shade disturbed Herod, and when he began to hear talk of Jesus and of His miracles he said to his courtiers, "This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead."

It seems that he kept his eye on the new prophet, and that at one time he thought of serving Him as he had his precursor; but either for political or superstitious reasons, deciding that he would have no more to do with prophets, he saw that the best way was to force Jesus to leave his Tetrarchy. One day some Pharisees, very probably acting on Herod's instructions, went to say to Jesus: "Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee."

"And he said unto them, Go ye and tell that fox . . . nevertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem."

And now at Jerusalem near His death, He appeared before that fox. That traitor and spy, incestuous adulterer, assassin of John and enemy of the prophets was the most fitting person to condemn innocence. But Jesus had named him well: he was more fox than tiger, and he shrank from being a substitute for Pilate. Luke tells us, "When Herod saw Jesus he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him."

The son of the Idumean and the Samaritan woman had scorched himself in John's fire, and he received Jesus as an old tamer of animals, with the marks of the lion's teeth still on his arm, looks at a new wild animal brought for him to see. But, like all Oriental barbarians, his mind was obsessed by prodigies, and he imagined Jesus to be a wandering wizard who could, whenever He wished, repeat some of His sorcery. Herod hated Him as he had hated John, but he hated Him partly because he feared Him; the prophets had a power which Herod did not understand and which intimidated him: perhaps the beheading of John had brought him bad luck. He too wished Jesus to be killed, but he had no mind to be in any way responsible for His death.

Seeing that there were no miracles to be expected, he began to put many questions, to which Jesus made no answer. He had broken His silence for Annas, for Caiaphas, for Pilate, but He would not for this crowned rascal! Annas and Caiaphas were His declared enemies, Pilate was a blind man groping along, thinking that he was saving Him, but this Herod was a cowardly fox and did not deserve even an insult. The High Priests and the Scribes, fearing that John's assassin would be too cowardly to kill Jesus, as in fact he was, had followed their victim there and vehemently accused him. These furious accusations and the silence of the accused man deepened the hidden rancor of Antipas, who, together with his soldiers, abused the Man of divine silences, threw over his shoulders a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate.

Like Pilate, but for other reasons, he was not willing to condemn the man baptized by John, and who perhaps was John himself returned from the dead to avenge himself. But when he sent Him away he made Him a gift which bears unconscious witness to the rank of the man about to die. The mantle, shining with whiteness, was, so Josephus says, the garment of the Jewish Kings, and Jesus was accused of wishing to make

Himself King of the Jews. Antipas, the astute, wished to ridicule the pretensions of Jesus by ironically making him a present of the regal robe; but when he covered Him with that whiteness, which is the symbol of innocence and of sovereignty, the ignoble fox sent to Pilate a symbolical message which involuntarily confirmed the message of Claudia Procula, the accusation of Caiaphas, and what Christ Himself had said.

CRUCIFY HIM!

Pilate had thought that he had succeeded in extracting himself from the troublesome position in which his adversaries had tried to place him. But when he saw Jesus return wrapped in that regal white garment he understood that he must at any cost get the matter settled.

The bitter fury of those who for so many reasons were objects of suspicion to him, his wife's compassion, the answers of Christ, the fact that Antipas had refrained from action, all inclined him to refuse to give the Jews the life for which they were asking. Perhaps while Jesus was with the Tetrarch, Pilate had asked some one of his followers about the pretended King, and the information confirmed him in his decision. Jesus had never said anything that would be offensive to Pilate: rather there was much in what He said calculated to please the Roman, or at least that would seem advantageous to the authority of Rome.

Jesus taught love for enemies, and in Judea the Romans were considered enemies; He called the poor blessed, hence He exhorted them to resignation and not to revolt; He advised men to render unto Cæsar that which was Cæsar's, that is, to pay tribute to the Emperor; He was opposed to the Pharisaical formalism which made the relations of the Romans with their subjects so difficult; He did not respect the Sabbath; He ate with publicans and with Gentiles; and finally He announced that His Kingdom was not of this world, but of a world so metaphysical and remote that it could never endanger Tiberius or his succcessors. If Pilate knew these things, he must have said to himself with the superficiality of all skeptics, especially when they think themselves expert politicians, that it would be a good thing for him and for Rome if many Jews followed Jesus, rather than fomented rebellion in the councils of the Zealots.

He had therefore decided to save Jesus, but in this indulgence he wanted to put a sarcastic note, something that would be offensive to the High Priests, who three times had set themselves against him and now were importuning him to be their hangman. Up to the last he would pretend to treat Jesus like the King of the Jews. Here is your King, the King that you deserve, wretched and perfidious people! A village carpenter, a vagabond, a beggar, who vapored of reigning beyond earthly life, and who as a matter of fact had as followers only a few fishermen and peasants and a few silly women. See how wretched He is, how miserable! Why do you want to kill Him? Keep Him; you deserve no better King than He. I will follow your example, will amuse myself a little by tormenting Him, and then I will let Him go.

And causing Jesus to be led out, Pilate went to the door and said to the High Priests and the others who crowded about, their faces thrust forward to hear the sentence given at last, "Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him. I will therefore chastise him and release him."

This was not the answer awaited by the ravening hounds, yelling in the square before the Procurator's house. A bestial cry burst out from those gaping mouths, "Kill Him!"

A flogging would be too light a punishment for this dangerous enemy of the God of Armies and the God of Business. Something quite different from that was necessary to satisfy these butchers of the Temple. They had come to ask for blood and not for pardon.

"Kill Him!" yelled Annas and Caiaphas, and with them the Pharisaical vipers hissed, the sellers of the holy animals shrieked, the money-changers, the men who rented beasts of burden, the porters of the caravans. "Kill Him!" howled the Scribes, wrapped in their theological cloaks, the vendors of the Passover fair, the tavern-keepers of the upper city, the Levites, the servants of the Temple, the hired helpers of the usurers, the errand boys of the priests, all the servile horde assembled before the Procurator's house.

As soon as this uproar was a little quieted, Pilate asked, "What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call King of the Jews?"

And they all answered, "Crucify him!"

But the Procurator resisted, "Why, what evil hath he done?"

And they cried out the more exceedingly, "Crucify him!"

Jesus, pale and calm in the whiteness of the mocking cloak, looked quietly at the crowd, which desired to give Him what in His heart He had been seeking. He was dying for them, with the divine hope of saving even them by His death, and they were assailing Him, howling as if He had wished to escape His accepted fate. His friends were not there, were hidden; all His people wished to pierce His flesh with nails, and only a foreigner, an idolater, defended His life. Why was Pilate not moved to compassion? Why did He not give Him at once to the crucifiers? Did he not realize that his false pity only lengthened and embittered the anguish? He loved and it was fitting that He should be hated; He brought men back from death and it was fitting that He should be killed; He wished to save others and it was fitting that all men should wish to destroy Him; He was innocent and it was fitting that He should be sacrificed.

But obstinate Pilate did not surrender to the howls of the Jews nor to Jesus' silent prayer. At any cost he wanted to win his point. He would not give in once more to that fierce, filthy mob. He had not succeeded in transferring to Antipas the disagreeable responsibility of a death-sentence; he had not succeeded in persuading this tigerish and mulish people of the innocence of their wretched king. What they wanted was to see a little blood; on these festival days they wanted to enjoy the spectacle of a crucifixion. He would satisfy them with a bargain, giving them the carcass of a murderer in exchange for the body of an innocent man.

BARABBAS

"I find in him no fault at all. But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover. Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?"

Taken by surprise, the people did not know what to answer. Until then there had been but one name, one victim, one punishment asked for; everything was as clear as the sky on that mid-April morning. But now, in order to save that scandal-maker, this impertinent pagan brought into question another name which confused the whole matter. Pilate wanted to flog Him only, instead of crucifying Him: and now he wanted to crucify another delinquent in His place. By good fortune the Elders, Scribes and Priests were still there and they had no intention of letting Jesus escape. In a flash they suggested the right reply. So that when Pilate asked them a second time which of the two they wished him to free, they answered with one voice, "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas!"

He was not an ordinary delinquent, the man whom the Procurator offered as blood-ransom to those men with such a morbid relish for crucifixions. The common tradition has preserved his memory as a street ruffian, a criminal by profession. But his surname—Bar Rabban, which means Son of Rab, or rather disciple of the Master, since the scholars of the Rabbis were called their sons—shows us that through birth or through study he belonged to the caste of Doctors of Law. Mark and Luke say expressly that he was accused of having committed murder during a sedition, hence a political assassin. Jesus Barabbas, a student in the school of the Scribes, lamenting over the loss of the Jewish Kingdom, and hating Judea's pagan masters, was probably a Zealot and had been captured in one of the unsuccessful revolts, so common at that time. Was it likely that such an absurd bargain would satisfy the Sadducee and Pharisee assembly which shared the sentiments of the Zealots, even if for reasons of state they hid them, or out of weakness of soul forgot them?

Barabbas, although an assassin, and indeed precisely because he was an assassin—was a patriot, a martyr, persecuted by the foreigners. Jesus, on the other hand, although He had never killed any one, had wished to overturn the law of Moses, and to ruin the Temple. The first, in short, was a sort of national hero, the other an enemy of the nation: there could be no doubt about their choice. "Free Barabbas! Let this man die!" Once more Pontius Pilate had failed to save Christ or himself. He ought to have realized before this, that the leaders of the Jews would not loose their hold on the flesh into which they had already set their teeth, the only flesh which could stay their hunger. Their need for it that day was like their need for bread and air. They would not have left that spot, not even to eat, until they had seen that Bastard Messiah fastened with four nails upon two beams.

Pontius Pilate was cowardly. He was afraid that he was committing an injustice; he was afraid of displeasing his wife; he was afraid of giving satisfaction to his enemies; but at the same time he was afraid to put Jesus in a place of safety; he was afraid to have his soldiers disperse that sullen, arrogant crowd; he was afraid to decide with a clear-cut act of authority that Jesus, the innocent man, should be released, and not Barabbas, the assassin. A real Roman, a Roman of antiquity, of the true Roman stock, would either at once have satisfied the demands of that turbulent crowd and would not have wasted a moment in defending an obscure visionary; or would at once have decreed, from the beginning, that this man was innocent and was under the august protection of the Empire.

By his stratagems, half-measures, indolent questionings, hesitations and partially executed maneuvers Pilate found himself slowly pushed towards a decision he did not wish to make. The fact that he had not at once decided the question with a yes or no had increased the insolence of the High Priests and the excitement of the people. Now there were only two alternatives: either to give in shamefully after resisting so long, or to risk starting a tumult which on those days, when Jerusalem included almost a third of the population of Judea, might become a perilous uprising.

Undone by his cowardly wavering, deafened by the yells, the only thing that came into his mind was to ask once more the advice of men to whom he should have issued orders.

"What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?"

"Crucify him, let him be crucified!"

"Why, what evil hath he done?"

"Crucify him! Crucify him!"

What affair is it of this odious foreigner if Jesus had done evil or not? According to our faith He is an impostor, a blasphemer, an enemy of the people and deserves death. Even if He has done no evil He deserves death because His words are more dangerous than any wicked actions.

"Crucify him! Crucify him!"

"Take ye him and crucify him," cried Pilate, "for I find no fault in him."

"We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God."

The silence of Jesus was more potent than this bestial outcry. They were fighting for the possession of His body, and He seemed scarcely to be aware of it. He knew that from the beginning of time His destiny was sealed and that this was His day. The battle was so uneven! On one side a Gentile, who knew nothing and understood nothing of Him, who did not defend Him through love but through Hate, who did not defend Him openly but with tricks and quibbles, who was more afraid of a revolt than of an injustice, who was stubborn through punctilio and not because of his certainty of Christ's innocence. On the other hand, a threatened clergy, a vindictive bourgeoisie, a crowd, like all crowds, easily incited to evil deeds. It was easy enough to foresee the outcome.

But Pontius Pilate would not yield the point. He would restore Barabbas to his accomplices, but he would not give up Jesus. His first idea came into his head again: to have Him scourged; perhaps when they saw the bruises and the blood dripping from His back they would be satisfied with that punishment and would leave in peace the innocent man who looked with equal pity on the cowardly shepherd and the unruly wolves.

The Procurator had said that he found no fault with Him, and yet he was to have Him scourged with rods. This contradiction, this half-injustice, this compromise, is characteristic of Pilate. But it was to be of no avail; like his other efforts, it was merely to add one more shame to his final defeat.

The Jews were still shrieking, "Let him be crucified!" But Pilate went back into his house and gave Jesus over to the Roman soldiers to be flogged.

A CROWNED KING

The mercenaries, who (in the provinces) were the majority in the legions, had been waiting for this decision. Throughout the long dispute the soldiers of the Procurator's guard had been obliged to look on, silent and motionless, at this mysterious colonial uproar, of which only one thing seemed clear to them, that their commanding officer was not cutting the best figure. For a while they had been amused by watching the sinister faces, the excitability and the gesticulation of that Jewish swarm; and they had become aware that the Procurator, somber and perplexed, was vainly trying to unravel the tangled threads of this early-morning quarrel. They kept their eyes on him, as dogs watch an unskillful hunter, circling about without making up his mind to fire, although the quarry is close at hand.

Now at last something to their taste happened. They were to have their turn at amusing themselves. To flog a Jew, hated by the Jews themselves, was an amusement neither dangerous nor very tiring,—just enough to exercise their arms, to stretch the muscles contracted by the morning chill, and to start the blood circulating.

All the company was ordered into the court-yard of the palace, and the white cloak given by Antipas was taken from Jesus' back—the first spoils of the enterprise—together with part of His other clothes. The lictors chose the rods, and the

ing out there in the public square, pretended to be a king. Let us give Him His wish, this madman, and thus we will enrage those who refuse Him His royal dignity.

A soldier took off his scarlet cloak, the red chlamys of the legionaries, and threw it over those shoulders, red with blood; another took up a handful of dry thorns, kindling for the brazier of the night-watch, twisted a couple of them together like a crown and put it on His head; a third had a slave give Him a reed and forced it into the fingers of His right hand; then, roaring with laughter, they pushed Him upon a seat. One by one, passing before Him, they bent their knees awkwardly, crying: "Hail, King of the Jews!"

But some were not satisfied with this burlesque homage, and one of them struck a blow at the cheek, still showing the marks of the fingers of Caiaphas' servants; one, snatching the reed out of His hand, gave Him a blow on the head, so that the thorns of His crown pierced the skin and made about His forehead a border of drops red as His cloak.

They would perhaps have thought of some other amusing diversion if the Procurator, coming up when they were making merry, had not ordered them to lead the scourged King outside. The jocose disguise invented by the legionaries fitted in with the sarcastic intention of Pilate. He smiled, and taking Jesus by the hand, led Him to the crowd of wild animals there, and cried: "Behold the man!"

THE WASHING OF THE HANDS

"Behold the man!"

And he turned Christ's shoulders towards that expanse of yelling muzzles that they might see the welts left by the rods, red with oozing blood. It was as if he said: Look at Him, your King, the only King that you deserve, in His true majesty, tricked out as befits such a King. His crown is of sharp thorns; His purple cloak is the chlamys of a mercenary; His scepter is a dry reed. These are the ornaments merited by your degraded King, unjustly rejected by a degraded people like yourselves. Was it His blood you desired? Here is His blood; see how it drops from the thorns of His crown. There is not much of it, but it ought to be enough for you, since it is innocent blood. It is shed as a great favor to you—to satisfy you. And now be off from here, for you have troubled me long enough!

But the Jews were quieted neither by these words nor by that spectacle. They demanded something quite other than a flogging and a masquerade before they would go their ways. Pilate thought that he could make mock of them, but he would realize that this was no time for feeble jokes. They had had the best of him twice already and they would again. A few bruises and a practical joke played by the soldiery were not enough to punish this enemy of God as He deserved; there were trees in Judea and nails to nail Him to them. And their hoarse voices shouted all together, "Let him be crucified! Let him be crucified!"

Too late Pilate realized that they had driven him into a tangle from which he could not disengage himself. All his decisions were combated with a pertinacity he had not foreseen. By a flash of inspiration he had pronounced the great words, "Behold the man!" But he himself did not understand that proclamation which transcended his base soul. He did not realize that he had found the truth he was seeking: a half-truth, but deeper than all the teachings of the philosophers of Rome and Greece. He did not understand how Jesus was really Man, the symbol of all humanity, sorrowing and humiliated, betrayed by its rulers, deceived by its masters, crucified every day by the Kings who oppress their subjects, by the rich who cause the poor to weep, by priests who think of their bellies rather than of God. Jesus is the Man of Sorrows announced by Isaiah, the man without form or comeliness, despised and rejected of men, who was to be killed for all men; He is God's only son who had taken on man's flesh, and who would ascend in the glory of power and of the new sun, in the midst of the blaring of the trumpets calling the dead to life. But now to the eyes of Pilate, to the eyes of Pilate's enemies, He was only a wretched, insignificant man, flesh for rods and for nails, a man and not Man, a

just against assassins But Pilate said, "I have done everything that I could to save Him from the hands of the unjust." That was not true; he had tried many ways, but not the only way which could have succeeded. He had not offered himself, had not sacrificed himself, had not been willing to risk his dignity and his fortune The Jews hated Jesus, but they also hated Pilate, who had harassed and derided them so many times. Instead of proposing the seditious Barabbas in exchange for Jesus, he ought to have proposed himself, Pontius Pilate, Procurator of Judea, and perhaps the people might have accepted the bargain. No other victim except himself would have satisfied the rage of the Jews. It would not have been necessary for him to die. It would have been enough to let them denounce him to Cæsar as Cæsar's enemy. Tiberius would have deposed him and perhaps have banished him, but he would have taken into exile and into disgrace a comforting certainty of innocence. Little did his shifts avail him; for the fate he now sought to avert by giving Jesus over into the hands of his adversaries fell upon him a few years later. The Jews and the Samaritans accused him; the Governor of Syria deposed him, and Caligula banished him to the frontiers of Gaul. But he was followed into his exile by the shade of that great, silent man, assassinated with his consent. In vain had he constructed in Jerusalem the great reservoir full of water, in vain had he washed himself with that water before the multitude. That water was Jewish water, turbid and ill-omened water that did not cleanse. No washing will ever cleanse his hands from the stains left on them by the divine blood of Christ.

GOOD FRIDAY

The sun rose higher in the clear April sky and now it was near to noon. The contest between the flaccid defender and the furious assailants had wasted most of the morning, and there was no time to lose. According to Mosaic law, the bodies of executed criminals could not remain after sunset on the place of punishment, and April days are not as long as June days.

Moreover, Caiaphas, reënforced though he was by so many furiously enraged partisans, could not draw a tranquil breath until the Vagabond's feet were forever halted, fastened with iron nails on the cross. He remembered how, a few days before, Jesus had entered the city surrounded with waving branches and joyful hymns. He was sure of the city itself, but at this period it was full of provincials come from everywhere, who had not the same interests and the same passions as the clientele dependent on the Temple. Those Galileans especially, who had followed Him until now, who loved Him, might make some effort at resistance and put off, even if they did not actually prevent, the real votive offering of that day.

Pilate, too, was in haste to have that troublesome, innocent man taken away. He did not wish to think of Him again. He hoped that he would forget after His death that look, those words and, above all, his own corroding uneasiness, so painfully like remorse. Although he had washed and dried his hands, that man in His silence, it seemed to him, was sentencing him to a penalty worse than death itself. Before that scourged man, at the point of death, he felt himself the guilty one. To vent his uneasiness on those who really caused it, he dictated the wording of the titulus or superscription, which the condemned man was to wear about His neck until it was fastened above His head at the top of the cross, as follows: "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." The Scribe wrote these words three times in three languages in clear, red letters on the white wood.

The leaders of the Jews, who had remained there, craning their necks, to hasten the preparations, read this sarcastic inscription and protested. They said to Pilate, "Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews."

But the Procurator cut them short with a dry brevity: "What I have written I have written."

These are the last words recorded of him, and the most profound! I am forced to make you a present of the life of this man, but I do not deny what I have said. Jesus is a Nazarene, which means also, saint. And He is your King, the wretched King who fits your wretchedness. I wish all men to know

saliva, and by the terrible effort of this last task set Him, He did not seem like the fearless young man who a few days before had scourged the vermin out of the Temple. His fair, shining face was drawn and contracted by the convulsions of pain; His eyes, red with suppressed tears, were sunken in their sockets; on His shoulders, torn by the rods, His clothes clung to the wounds, increasing His sufferings; His legs, more than His other members, felt this terrible weakness, and they bent under His weight and under that of the cross. "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." After the vigil, which had been the beginning of His agony, how many blows had been struck upon that flesh! Judas' kiss, the flight of His friends, the rope on His wrists, the threats of the judges, the blows of the guard, the cowardice of Pilate, the howling demands for His death, the insults of the legionaries, and now this weight of the cross, carried along amid the sneers and scoffing of those whom He loved!

Those who saw Him pass took no notice of Him, or at the most, those who knew how to read tried to make out the inscription which hung down on His chest. Many, however, knew Him by sight and by name, and pointed Him out to their neighbors with learned and complacent airs. Some of them mingled with the crowd, following behind to enjoy to the end the spectacle, always new, of a man's death; and more would have followed if it had not been a day when there was much to do at home. Those who had begun to hope in Him now despised Him because He had not been stronger, because He had let Himself be taken like any sneak-thief; and to ingratiate themselves with the Priests and Elders mingled with the crowd, they cast out at the false Messiah as He went by some neatly phrased insult. Very few were those who felt any movement of pity to see Him in that situation and among those few were some who did not know who He was, who were moved merely by the natural pity which any crowd feels for condemned men. Some few there were who still felt a little love in their hearts for the Master who had loved the poor, who had healed the sick, who had announced the Kingdom so much more righteous and holy than the kingdoms then in existence and ruining the earth. But these were few, and they were almost ashamed of that secret tenderness for one whom they had believed to be less hated or more powerful. The greater part laughed, satisfied and contented, as if this funeral procession had been a part of the feast-day.

Only some women, their heads wrapped in their cloaks, came behind all the rest, weeping, but trying to hide this seditious grief.

They had not yet come to the Gate of Gardens, but they were almost there when Jesus, His strength utterly exhausted, fell to the ground and lay there stretched under His cross. His face had suddenly gone white as snow; the reddened eyelids were dropped over His eyes; He would have seemed dead if it had not been for the painful breath coming and going through His half-open mouth.

They all stopped, and a dense circle of jeering men stretched out their faces and hands towards the fallen man. The Jews, who had followed Him from Caiaphas' house, would not listen to reason.

"He is only pretending," they cried. "Lift Him up! He is a hypocrite! He ought to carry the cross to the last! That is the law! Give Him a kick, as you would to an ass, and let Him get along!"

Others said, "Look at the great King who was to conquer Kingdoms. He cannot manage even two sticks of wood, and yet He wanted to wear armor. He said that He was more than a man, and see, He is a womanish creature who faints away at the first work given Him. He made paralytics walk and He Himself cannot stand up. Give Him a cup of wine to bring back His strength."

But the Centurion who, like Pilate, was in great haste to finish his distasteful task, was experienced in the handling of men, and saw clearly that the unfortunate Jesus would never be able to drag the cross along all the way to Golgotha. He cast his eyes about to find some one to carry that weight. Just at that moment there came in from the country a Cyrenian called Simon, who, at the sight of so many people, had stepped into the crowd and was looking with an astonished and pitying

more intimate tenderness those whom He is leaving, even those who are working for His death. And from the depths of His soul, like a song of victory over the torn and weary flesh, rise up the words, never to be forgotten by men, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

No more divine prayer was ever raised to Heaven since men have lived and prayed; it is not the prayer of a man, but of a God to a God. Men, who cannot pardon even the innocence of an innocent man, had never before that day dreamed that a man might pray for the forgiveness of those who were putting him to death.

For they know not what they do! Wrongs consciously wrought cannot be absolved without assurance of repentance. But the ignorance of men is so appallingly great that only a few really know what they do.

Jesus had taught what men should know; but how many knew it? Even His own Disciples, the only ones to know that Jesus was Christ, had been overcome by the fear of losing this last remnant of their lives; even as they fled away, they had shown that they did not know what they did. And even more ignorant of what they really did were the Pharisees, fearful of losing their preëminence; the Doctors, fearful of losing their privileges; the rich, fearful of losing their money; Pilate, fearful of losing his office; and most ignorant of all were the Jews, misled by their leaders, and the soldiers obedient to orders. None of them knew who Christ was and what He came to do, and why He was killed. Some of them were to know it, but afterwards, and they came to know it only through the intercession of the Man whom they were killing.

Now, at the point of death, He had confirmed His most difficult and divine teaching, "Love for enemies," and He could now hold out His hands to the hammer. The crosses had been raised; now they were piling stones about them to steady them under the weight, and were filling the holes with earth, stamping it down with their feet.

The women of Jerusalem approached the condemned Man with a pitcher. It contained a mixture of wine, incense and myrrh, which the executioners, out of the goodness of their hearts, imagined would dull consciousness. Those very people who were making Him suffer pretended as a last insult that they had mercy on that suffering, and by reducing it by the merest trifle they thought they had the greater right to demand that the rest of the cup of suffering be drained. But Jesus, as soon as He had tasted this mixture, bitter as gall, pushed it away. He would have accepted a single word in place of the wine, but the only one on that day who could find the word to say was one of the thieves whom they had dragged up to the place of the skull with Him.

The incense and the myrrh which they offered Him on that day were not perfumed like that incense and myrrh brought to Him in the stable by the Wise Men from the distant Orient. And in place of the gold which had lighted the dingy darkness of the stable, there was the iron of the nails, gray now, waiting to be reddened. And that wine which seemed poisoned so bitter was it, was not the genial nuptial wine of Cana, nor that which He had drunk the evening before, warm and dark as blood dripping from a wound.

FOUR NAILS

On the top of the hill of the Skull the three crosses, tall, dark, with outspread beams like giants with outstretched arms, stood out against the great sweep of the sweet spring sky. They threw no shadow, but they were outlined by brilliant reflections from the sun. The beauty of the world on that day in that hour was so great that tortures were unthinkable; could they not, those wooden branches, blossom out with field flowers, and be wreathed with garlands of tender green, hiding the scaffold with verdure, in the shade of which reconciled and friendly brothers might sit down?

But the Priests, the Scribes, the Pharisees, those who gloated over suffering and over revenge, who had come there to satisfy their morbid appetites with the spectacle of three deaths, were stamping with impatience, and jeeringly hastening on the Romans.

The Centurion gave an order. Two soldiers approached

Then he came down the ladder for the last time, threw away his hammer, and looked to see if his companions had finished their work. The thieves, too, were now in place and all three crosses had their flesh-offerings. The soldiers could rest and divide the garments which henceforth the men up there on the crosses needed no more. This was the perquisite of the executioners and came to them by law. Four soldiers had a right to Jesus' clothes and they divided them into four parts. This left the tunic, which was without seam, woven all in one piece. It would be a sin to cut it, for after that it would be of no use to any one; but one of them, an old gambler, took out his dice, threw them, and the tunic was awarded by luck. From now on the only possession of the King of the Jews was the thorns of His crown which, as a greater insult, they had left on His head.

All was finished: the drops of blood fell slowly from His hands on the ground and the blood from His feet reddened the cross. From now on He was to flee no more; His blaspheming mouth was soon to be gaping in agony, but it was to teach no more forever. The assassins might be satisfied with themselves and with the foreign executioners. The poisoner of the people, the enemy of the Temple and of business, was fastened with four solid nails on the tree of ignominy. From that night on the lords of Jerusalem could sleep more peacefully.

A clamor of demoniac laughter, of exultant exclamations, of ferocious jests rose from the crowd about Golgotha. There He was, the bird of ill-omen, nailed with outspread wings. The poor man, satisfied if He had but a tunic, now was altogether naked; the vagabond, who had only a stone on which to lay His head, now had a fine pillow of wood; the impostor who deceived with His miracles, no longer had His hands free to mold the clay which restored sight to the blind; the throne of the King was a hard wooden peg; the hater of Jerusalem was hung up in sight of the Holy City; the Master with so many disciples now had as companions only two thieves who insulted Him, and four bored soldiers. "Call on the Father now to save Thee, ask for a legion of angels to take Thee away from there and disperse us with flaming swords. Then even we will believe that Thou art the Christ, and we will fall down with our faces in the dust to adore Thee."

And some of the priests, shaking their heads, said: "Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross."

This challenge recalls that of Satan in the desert. They, like Satan, wished for a prodigy. They had asked so many times for a sign! "It would be a fine sign if Thou couldst loosen the four nails and come down from the cross, and if the power of the Father should flame out in the Heavens destroying us as God-killers. But Thou seest well that the nails are strong and are not loosened, and that no one appears to aid Thee from heaven or from earth."

The Scribes, the Elders, mocked Him in the same way, and so did even the soldiers, although the affair was none of theirs, and even the thieves also, suffering though they were in anguish with Him.

"He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he will have him: . . . for he said, I am the Son of God."

He had announced that He came to give life, but now He could not save Himself from death! He had boasted that He was the Son of God, but God did not move to save His first-born from the scaffold. Therefore, He had always lied; it was not true that He had ever saved any one. It was not true that God was His Father, and if He had lied about that, He had lied about everything, and deserved this fate. There was no need of proof, but the proof was there so clear that all could see it, and their consciences were perfectly at rest. If any miracle were possible, He would no longer be crucified there to agonize; but the sky was empty and the sun, God's light, shone clearly that all men might see more clearly the contractions of His face and the painful heaving of His chest.

"What a pity that the Romans do not allow our old punishment for blasphemers, for it would have relieved us to have stoned Thee one by one. Thus every one would have had his share of pleasure, taking aim at the head with well-directed stones, and covering Thee with bruises, clothing Thee in a tunic of stones. Once before when the adulteress was brought before Thee we put down our stones, but to-day no one would be backward, and Thou wouldst have paid for Thee and for her! The cross is well enough, but how much less satisfying for the spectators! If only these foreigners had permitted us to give a blow of the hammer on the nails! Thou answerest not? Hast Thou no longer any desire to preach? Canst Thou not come down? Why dost Thou not deign to convert us also? If we ought to love Thee, show us first that God loves Thee enough to do a great miracle to save Thee from death!"

But the divine Sacrifice was silent. The torture of the fever, which had begun already, was not so terrible as those words of His brothers who were crucifying Him a second time on the cross of their appalling ignorance.

DISMAS

The thieves who had been crucified with Jesus had begun to be hostile to Him in the street when He was liberated from the weight of His cross. They felt aggrieved because no one thought of them; they were to die the same death, but no one seemed to think of this; people abused Him, but at least they recognized that He was there, they were all thinking about Him, running along for His sake as if He had been alone. It was for Him that all those people were following along—important people, educated and wealthy—it was for Him that the women were weeping and that even the Centurion was moved to pity. He was the King of the occasion, this country cheat, and He drew every one's attention as if He had really been a King. Who knew, perhaps the wine with myrrh would never have been offered to them, if He had not been so fastidious as to refuse it.

But one of them, when he heard the great words of his envied companion, "Forgive them; for they know not what they do," suddenly fell silent. That prayer was so new for him, summoned him to emotions so foreign to his nature and all his life, that it carried him back at one stroke to his almost forgotten childhood, when he also was innocent, and when he knew there was a God of whom one could ask for peace as poor men beg for bread at the rich man's door. But in no canticle could he remember hearing any such prayer as this, so extraordinary, so paradoxical in the mouth of one who was at that moment being killed. And yet those impossible words found in the thief's withered heart an echo of something he would have liked to believe, above all at that moment when he was about to appear before a Judge more awful than those of the law-courts. This prayer of Jesus' found an unexpected echo in his own thought, a thought beyond his power to formulate or express, but which now seemed to him luminous in the darkness of his fate. Had he really known what he was doing? Had other men ever thought of him? Had they ever done for him what they could to turn him from evil? Had there ever been any one who really loved him? Had any one given him food when he was hungry and a cloak when he was cold, and a friendly word when suddenly temptations laid siege to his lonely and dissatisfied soul? If he had had a little more bread and love, would he have committed the actions which had brought him to Golgotha? Was he not also among those who knew not what they do, distraught by poverty, abandoned among ambushed passions? Were they not thieves like him, the Levites who trafficked in the offerings of the faithful, the Pharisees who cheated widows, the rich men, who by their usury drained dry the veins of the poverty-stricken? Those were the men who had condemned him to death; but what right had they to kill him if they had never done anything to save him, and if they, too, were tainted with his guilt?

All these thoughts went through his distracted heart while he waited to be fastened to the cross. The nearness of death—and what a death!—this unheard-of prayer of the man who was not a thief, but who was suffering the penalty of thieves, the hate which deformed the faces of the men who had condemned him also, moved his poor, maimed soul, and inclined him to emotions unfelt since his boyhood, to emotions the very name of which he did not know, but which were very like to tenderness and repentance.

When they were all on the cross, the other thief, although suffering terribly from his pierced hands and feet, began again to insult Jesus. He also began to vomit out the challenge of the Jews, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us."

If He were really the Son of God would He not have thought of freeing also His companions in misery? Why was He not moved to compassion? Hence, they were right, those men down there: He was a deceiver, a man of no account, an execrated outcast. And the anger of the raging thief was intensified by his fury over a lost hope, an abortive hope, an impossible dream of miraculous salvation; but a despairing man hopes even for the impossible, and this hope withdrawn seemed to him a betrayal.

But the Good Thief who had been listening to him, and to the other raging voices shrieking down below, now turned to his companion. "Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing amiss."

The thief had passed from the doubt of his own blameworthiness to the certainty of the innocence of that mysterious Pardoner at his side. "We have committed deeds (he was not willing to call them crimes) which men punish, but this man has done nothing amiss, and yet He is punished as we are; why, therefore, insult Him? Hast thou no fear that God will punish thee for having humiliated an innocent man?"

And he turned over in his mind what he had heard told about Jesus—only a few things and those not at all clear to him—but he knew that Jesus had spoken of a Kingdom of Peace and that He himself was to be at the head of it. Then with impetuous faith as if he invoked the blood which fell at the same moment from his criminal hands and from those guiltless hands, he cried out these words, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

We have suffered together; wilt Thou not recognize the man who was beside Thee on the cross, the only man who defended Thee when all were attacking Thee?

And Jesus, who had answered no man, turned His head as well as He could towards the pitying thief and answered him, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

He could promise him nothing earthly: what would it have availed him to be unnailed from the cross and to drag himself along the roads of the earth a few years more, crippled and needy? And unlike the other thief he had not asked to be saved from death: he had asked only to be remembered after his death, if Jesus should return in glory. Jesus instead of fleshly and uncertain life promised him the eternal life of Paradise, and that without delay—"to-day."

He had sinned; in the eyes of men, he had gravely sinned, he had taken away from the rich a little of their riches, perhaps he had also stolen a little from the poor, but for sinners ailing with an illness worse than any bodily weakness, Jesus had always a tenderness of which He made no show, but which He was never willing to hide. Had He not come to bring back to the warmth of the stable the flock lost among the thorns of the countryside? Were not the wicked already sufficiently punished with their own wickedness? And those who thought themselves righteous, were they not perhaps often more corrupt than the wicked they condemned? Jesus does not pardon all men. That would be injustice, holier than the injustice of the world, but still unjust. But a single motion of repentance, a single word of regret is enough. The prayer of the thief was enough to absolve him.

The Good Thief was Jesus' last convert in His corporeal existence. He was the last Disciple and at the same time the first of the martyrs, for Peter's Gospel tells us that when they heard his words, the Jews were angered against him and demanded that his legs should not be broken, in order that he might die in greater torment. The legs of crucified men were broken out of mercy that their sufferings might end sooner; this shortening of his torture was refused to him because he had defended Christ and believed in Him: like his Master, he was forced to drink his cup to the dregs.

We know nothing more of him; only his name preserved in an apocryphal manuscript. The Church has received him among her saints because of this promise of Christ, with the name of Dismas.

THE DARKNESS

Jesus' breathing was more and more like the death-rattle. His chest heaved with convulsive efforts to breathe; loud, painful pulses hammered at His temples. His heart beat so rapidly and so violently that it shook Him as if it would tear Him loose; the feverish thirst of crucified men flamed all over His body, as if His blood had become a raging molten fire in His veins. Stretched in that painful position, nailed to the beams and not able to move, held up by His hands, which were lacerated if He let Himself hang by them, but which, if He held them up, exhausted His weak and worn-out frame, that young and divine body which had suffered so many times because it contained too great a soul, was now a funeral pyre of suffering where all the sufferings of the world burned together.

As ancient writers admitted, crucifixion was the cruelest and blackest of punishments. It gave the greatest torture for the longest time. If tetanus set in, a merciful torpor hastened death; but there were men who held out, suffering always more and more, until the second day after crucifixion, and even longer. The thirst of their fever, the congestion of their hearts, the rigidity of their veins, their cramped muscles, the dizziness and terrible pains in the head, the ever-greater agony—all these were not enough to make an end of them. But most men died at the end of twelve hours.

The blood from the four wounds of Jesus had clotted about the nail-heads, but every movement made fresh blood gush out, which fell slowly along the cross and dripped upon the ground. His head drooped on His weary neck; His eyes, those mortal eyes, whence God had looked out upon the earth, were glazing over in the death stupor; and His livid lips, parched with suffering and thirst, drawn by His painful breathing, were withered by that last kiss, the poisonous kiss of Judas.

Thus died a God, who had cooled the blood of the feverish, had given the water of life to the thirsty, who had raised up the dead from their tombs, who had quickened the paralyzed, cast out demons from obsessed souls, who had wept with the weeping, who, instead of punishing the wicked, had made them to be born again into a new life, who had taught with poetic words and proved by miracles that glorious aspiration—the life of perfect love—which raging beasts sunk in stupor and in blood would never have been capable of discovering for themselves. He had healed wounds and they wounded all His perfect body; He had pardoned evildoers, and evildoers nailed Him, an innocent man, between two criminals; He had infinitely loved all men, even those unworthy of His love, and hatred had nailed Him there where hatred punished and was punished; He had been more righteous than righteousness and they had wreaked upon Him the most iniquitous unrighteousness; He had called mean souls to holiness and He had fallen into the hands of vilifiers and demons. He had brought life, and in return they gave Him the most ignominious death.

All this was necessary that men should learn again the road to the earthly Paradise; that they should mount above drunken bestiality and attain the exaltation of the saints; that they should be resurrected from their sluggish folly which seems life and is death, to the magnificence of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The mind may bow before the dreadful mystery of this necessity, but the heart of men can never forget the price exacted as payment of our debts. For nineteen hundred years, men born again in Christ, worthy to know Christ, to love Christ, and to be loved by Him, have wept, at least once in their lives, at the memory of that day and of that suffering. But all our tears gathered together like a bitter sea do not compensate for one of the drops which fell, red and heavy, on Golgotha.

A barbarous king of barbarians pronounced the most vigorous words ever spoken by Christian lips about that blood. They were reading to Clovis the story of the Passion, and the fierce King was sighing and weeping when suddenly, no longer able to contain himself, clapping his hand to the hilt of his sword, he cried out, "Oh, that I had been there with my Franks!" Ingenuous words, words of a soldier and of a violent man, opposed to Christ's words, spoken to Peter among the olives, but words beautiful with all the naïve beauty of a candid and virile love. For it is not enough to weep over Christ who gave more than tears; we must fight, fight in us everything that divides us from Christ, fight in our midst all of Christ's enemies.

For, although millions of men have since wept when thinking of that day, on that Friday around the cross, all except the women were laughing, and those men who laughed have left sons and grandsons, many of them baptized, and they still laugh and their descendants will continue to laugh until the day when One alone will be able to laugh. If weeping cannot cancel that blood, what punishment can ever expiate that awful laughter?

Look at them therefore once more, those who are laughing about the cross where Jesus hangs pierced by the most agonizing pain. There they are, clustered on the slopes of Golgotha, dehumanized by hate! Look at them well, look them in the face, one by one; you will recognize them all, for they are immortal.

See how they thrust out their twitching muzzles, their scrawny necks, their noses humped and hooked, their rapacious eyes, gleaming under their bristling eyebrows. See how hideous they are, branded with the mark of Cain. Count them over well, for they are all there, just like the men whom we now know, brothers of the men whom we meet every day in our streets. Not one is missing.

In the front row there are the priests, with crammed paunches, with arid hearts, with great hairy ears, with thick-lipped, gaping mouths, craters of blasphemy. And elbow to elbow with them, the arrogant Scribes, blear-eyed and scrofulous, their faces of an excremental yellow, piecers-together of lies, belching out pus and ink. And the Epulones, thrusting out before them the obscene heaviness of their stuffed bellies, brutes who trade on hunger, who fatten on famines, who convert into money the patience of the poor, the beauty of virgins, the sweat of slaves. And the money-changers, expert in illicit traffic and in oppression, who live to wrest unlawfully from others; and the knotty lawyers skillful at turning the law against the innocent. And behind these high pillars of society, there is the mob of cheating scullions, of overbearing rascals, of foul-mouthed rogues, of whining beggars, of filthy knaves, the lower dregs of the population, famished hounds who eat under the tables and snarl between the legs of whoever does not give them either a mouthful or a kick.

They are the eternal enemies of Christ—they who celebrated on that day their infamous Saturnalia; and they have vomited out on Christ's face their poisonous saliva, the muddy lees of their souls. This miry dross of humanity, foul and polluted, vomited out from their filthy hearts their hatred for Him who was saving them; they howled against Him who was forgiving them; they insulted Christ who was agonizing for them, Christ who was dying for them. The antithesis of good and evil, innocence and infamy, light and darkness, was never presented with such a dramatic and utter contrast as on that irreparable day.

Nature itself seemed to wish to hide the horror of that sight: the sky, which all the morning had been clear, suddenly grew dark. A thick cloud, dark as though it came from the marshes of hell, rose above the hills and little by little spread to every corner of the horizon. Black clouds gathered about the sun, that sweet, clear April sun, which had warmed the hands of the murderers, encircled it, laid siege to it, and finally covered it with a thick curtain of darkness . . . "and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour."

LAMA SABACHTHANI

Many, alarmed by the falling of that mysterious darkness, fled away from the Hill of the Skull, and went home, silenced. But not all; the air was calm; no rain fell as yet, and in the obscurity, the three pallid bodies shone out whitely; many of the spectators wished to sate themselves to the very last on His agony; why go away from the theater until the tragedy is finished to the last scream?

And those who remained listened in the darkness to hear if the hated protagonist would break by some word His groaning death-rattle. Christ's sufferings constantly became more intolerable. His body, sensitive and delicate by nature, exhausted by the tension of these last days, convulsed by the struggle of the last night, worn out by the tortures of the last hours, could endure no more. And His spirit suffered even more than the tortured body which still for a short time was its prison. It seemed to Him that His divinely youthful soul had become suddenly aged, and that He was old beyond memory. Everything seemed far-distant from Him, the companions of His happy days, the confidants of His tenderness, the poor who looked lovingly at Him, the children whose heads He had caressed, the healed men and women who could not bring themselves to leave Him, His Disciples for whom He had created a new soul—they were all far away. Close to Him there were only a gang of cannibals, possessed by the devil, eager for Him to die.

Only the women had not deserted Him. On one side at some distance from the cross, through fear of the howling men, Mary, His mother, Mary Magdalene, Mary of Cleofa, Salome, mother of James and John—and perhaps also Joanna of Cusa, and Martha—were present, terrified witnesses of His death. He still had the strength to confide to John, the dearest and most sacred inheritance which He left on earth—the Virgin of Sorrows. But after this, through the veil of His suffering, He saw no one and believed Himself alone with death, as He had ever been alone at the most solemn moments of His life. Even the Father seemed suddenly remote, inexplicably absent. Where was that loving Father to whom He was wont to speak, sure that He would be answered, would be helped? Why did the Father not help Him, give some sign of His presence, or at least show Jesus the mercy of calling Him to God without cruel delay?

And then there was heard in the thick air, in the silence of the darkness, these words, "Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani?" that is to say: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

This was the first verse of a psalm which He had repeated to Himself many times because He had found there so many presages of His life and of His death. He no longer had the strength to cry it all aloud as He had in the desert, but now into His troubled spirit those sorrowing invocations came back one by one, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? . . . Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: . . . but I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. Be not far from me: for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have compassed me: . . . they gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd: and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet . . . they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. But be thou not far from me, O Lord: O my strength, haste thee to help me."

The supplications of this prophetic psalm, which recall so closely the Man of Sorrows of Isaiah, rose from the wounded heart of the crucified Man as the last expression of His dying humanity. But certain of the brutes nearest to the cross thought that He was calling Elias, the immortal prophet, who in the popular imagination was to appear with Christ. "Behold, He calleth Elias."

One of the soldiers now took a sponge, soaked it in vinegar, put it on a reed and held it to the lips of Christ. But the Jews said, "Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down."

The legionary, not wishing to make trouble, laid down the reed. But after a little—and the time seemed infinitely long in that darkness, in that suspense, that painful tension—Christ's voice came down as if from a great distance, "I thirst."

The soldier took up the sponge again, dipped it once more in the vessel full of the mixture of water and vinegar and once more held it to the parched mouth which had prayed for his forgiveness. And Jesus when He had taken the vinegar said, "It is finished."

Christ, who had satisfied so many times the thirst of others, and who left in the world an ever-springing fountain of life, where the weary find strength, the corrupt find their youth, and the restless find peace, Christ had always suffered with an unsatisfied thirst for love. And even now in the terrible burning of His fever, His thirst was not for water but for a pitying word which would break the oppression of His desolate solitude. Instead of the pure water of the Galilean brooks, instead of the heart-warming wine of the Last Supper, the Roman soldier gave Him a little of his acid drink, but the prompt and kindly act of that obscure slave quenched His thirst, because, although reeling in the darkness of death, He felt that a human heart had pitied His heart.

If a stranger who had never seen Him before that day had done this, although so small a thing, through compassion for Him, it was a sign that the Father had not abandoned Him. The cup was finished: all the bitterness was drunk. Eternity began. With His last strength He cried with a loud voice in the darkness: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!"

I called Thee because it seemed to me in the darkness of my suffering that Thou hadst left me. But now Thou hast answered. Thou hast answered by means of this poor soldier; Thou hast answered with the peace which dulls the last pangs of my death, the death which brings me to my awakening with Thee. It is not true that Thou hadst abandoned me. When I called Thee it was not I who spoke but that human blood burning in my veins, and dropping from the nails. I know that Thou art present with me, one with me to all eternity: Thou art my Father and I Thy Son. Into what dearer and surer hands could I commend my soul?

And Jesus, after he had cried out with a loud voice, bowed His head and gave up the spirit. That loud cry, so powerful that it freed the soul from the flesh, rang out of the darkness and lost itself in the furthermost ends of the earth. Matthew tells us that "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and appeared unto many." But the hearts of the spectators were harder than rocks; none of those dead souls who wore the outward aspect of life were reanimated at that supreme summons.

Nineteen hundred years have passed from the day when the earth echoed to that cry, and men have intensified the tumult of their lives that they may drown it out. But in the fog and smoke of our cities, in the darkness, ever more profound where men light the fires of their wretchedness, that despairing cry of joy and of liberation, that prodigious cry which eternally summons every one of us, still rings in the heart of every man who has not forced himself to forget.

Christ was dead. He had died on the cross in the manner which men had willed, which the Son had chosen, to which the Father had consented. The death-struggle was over and the Jews were satisfied. He had expiated all up to the last, and now He was dead. Now our own expiation begins—and it is not yet finished.

WATER AND BLOOD

Christ was dead, as the leaders of His people had wished, but not even His last cry had awakened them. Some of them, says Luke, went away smiting their breasts; but were there within those breasts hearts which truly felt for the great heart which had stopped beating? They did not speak, they hurried home to their supper,—perhaps it was more terror than love which they were feeling.

But a foreigner, the Centurion, Petronius, who had been the silent witness of the execution, was moved, and from his pagan mouth came the words of Claudia Procula, "Certainly this was a righteous man."

He did not even know the true name of the man who was dead, but he was sure at least that He was no evildoer. He was the third Roman witness in favor of the innocence of Christ, who was to become, through the Apostles, eternally Roman.

The Jews had no thought of recantations. What was in their minds was the thought that the Passover would be spoiled if the bloody corpses were not carried away at once. Evening was close at hand and with the setting of the sun the great Sabbath began. Therefore they sent word to Pilate to have the condemned men's legs broken at once and to have them buried. The breaking of the legs was one of the cruel discoveries of cruelty to shorten the sufferings of crucified men,—a sort of grace useful in cases of haste. The soldiers, when they had received the order, came up to the bad thief, who, more robust than his companions, was still alive, and they broke his legs with a club.

They had seen Jesus die, and they could save themselves the trouble of using the club, but John says that one of them, to make quite sure, pierced His side with a spear, and saw with astonishment that water and blood came out from the wound. The name of this soldier according to an old tradition was Longinus, and it is said that some drops of that blood fell upon his eyes which had been infected, and immediately cured them. The history of martyrs tells of him that

Longinus believed in Christ from that day on, and was a monk for twenty-eight years at Cæsarea until he was murdered because of his faith. Claudia Procula, the pious legionary, who for the last time wet the lips of the dying man, the Centurion, Petronius, and Longinus were the first Gentiles who accepted Jesus on the very day when Jerusalem had cast Him out.

But not all the Jews had forgotten Him. Now that He was dead, really dead, now that He was cold like all dead men, and motionless like any other corpse, now that He was a silent, harmless, quiet corpse, a body with no soul, a silent mouth, a heart which beat no more, see how they come out from the houses where they had shut themselves in, the friends of the twenty-fifth hour, the tepid followers, the secret disciples, the anonymous admirers, who at night hide their light under a bushel, and when the sun shines, disappear. We have all known friends like these, cautious souls, trembling at the idea of what people will say, who follow you but from afar; receive you—but when no one can see you together; esteem you—but do not so much as admit this esteem to others; love you—but not so much as to lose a single hour of sleep or a single miserable penny to help you! But when death comes, even when it comes through the fault or the avarice, or the cowardice of such despicable men, then their celebration begins. They are the ones who weep more tears and more glittering tears than any one else. They are the ones who weave together with busy hands the flowers of the wreaths and the flowers of funereal rhetoric; and with enthusiasm and ardor become necrologists, epitaph writers, and memorialists. To see them you would think that the deceased had had no more faithful, no more loving companions than they, and good-hearted people are moved to compassion for those unfortunate survivors who seem to have lost a half, or at the very least, a quarter of their souls.

To His sorrow in life and in death Christ had many friends of this sort, and two of them stepped forward in that Good Friday twilight. They were two serious and worthy citizens, two notables of Jerusalem and of the Council, two rich lords, in short two members of the Sanhedrin; Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

In order not to stain their hands with the blood of Jesus, they had kept away from the meeting of the Sanhedrin and had hidden themselves in their houses, heaving regretful sighs, perhaps, and thinking that they could thus save their reputation and their conscience. But they did not reflect that even passive complicity was active help to the assassins, and that to abstain from opposition, not even to voice their opposition, was equivalent to consenting. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had therefore taken part in the murder of Christ, although they had been absent and invisible, and their posthumous grief can diminish but by no means cancel their responsibility.

But in the evening when they ran no risk of offending their colleagues, when the Elders had received full satisfaction and had left Golgotha, when there was no danger of compromising themselves in the eyes of high clerical and middle-class society, since the dead man was dead and could harm no one, the two nocturnal disciples, hidden, "for fear of the Jews," thought that they would diminish their remorse by providing for the burial of the executed man.

The bolder of the two, Joseph, ". . . went in boldly unto Pilate" (Mark noted the fact as remarkable for that toga-clad rabbit) and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate was astonished that He should already be dead, since crucified men often lived for two days—and called in Petronius, who had been charged with the execution. After Pilate had heard his report, he "gave" the body to the Sanhedrist. The Procurator was generous on that day because as a rule the Roman officers forced the families of condemned men to pay for the corpses. He could not say no to a person so respectable, and rich into the bargain. Possibly, too, this free gift came as much from weariness as from generosity. They had annoyed him all the morning with that troublesome King, and now he had no peace even when He was dead!

When Joseph had received permission he took a fine white winding-sheet and linen bands, and went towards the Hill of the Skull. There, or on the way there, he met Nicodemus, who, having the same character, may have been his friend, and who had come with the same thought. Nicodemus also had not spared expense, and had brought with him on the shoulders of a servant a hundred pounds of a mixture of myrrh and aloes.

And when they came to the cross, while the soldiers were taking down the two thieves to throw them into the common grave of condemned men, they prepared themselves to take down the body of Jesus.

PERFUMES IN THE ROCK

What little light had penetrated the dark cloud disappeared with the setting of the sun. The darkness was thick and sinister. A black night was shutting down on the world which on that day had lost the only Being which could give it light. Against the scarcely visible whiteness of the Hill of the Skull, the naked corpses glimmered dimly. They were obliged to work by the red light of torches, flaming without smoke in that windless air, and by that blood-red light they could see clearly, even to the long streaks of blood which had run down the foot of the cross, to the newly stirred earth.

Joseph, aided by Nicodemus and by a third helper, was scarcely able to draw out the deep-driven nails which held the feet. The ladder was still there. One of them, climbing up on it, took out the nails from the hands, supporting the loosened body with his shoulder. The others helped him to lower down the corpse, and the body was placed on the knees of the Virgin of Sorrows who had borne Him. Then they all made their way towards a garden near by where there was a sepulcher destined for Jesus. The garden belonged to the rich Joseph, who had had the sepulcher hewn out of the stone for himself and his family, for in those days every well-to-do Jew had a family sepulcher far from all the others, and the dead were not condemned to the promiscuity of our administrative cemeteries; temporary, geometric, and democratic like all our modern magnificent barbarisms.

As soon as they had arrived at the garden, the two bearers of the dead had water brought from the well, and washed the body. Until then the women, the three Marys—the Virgin Mary, the contemplative Mary, the liberated Mary—had not moved from the place where He whom they loved had died. Now, defter and more skillful than men, they began to help in order that this burial, performed thus at night and in haste, would not be unworthy of Him for whom they wept. They lifted from His head the insulting crown of Pilate's legionaries, and plucked out the thorns which had penetrated the skin: they were the ones to smooth and arrange the hair clotted with blood; and to close the eyes into which they had looked so many times with pure tenderness, and that mouth which they had never kissed. Many loving tears fell upon that face where in the calm paleness of death the old sweetness shone once more, and their tears washed it with water purer than that from Joseph's well.

All His body was sullied with sweat, with dust, with blood; bloody serum oozed out from the wounds of the hands, of the feet, of the chest. When the washing was finished, the corpse was sprinkled with Nicodemus' spices, and that without sparing, for they were abundant; even the black wounds left by the nails were filled with spices. The body of Jesus had received nothing but insults and blows after the evening when the sinning woman with a premonition of this day had poured nard upon the feet and upon the head of the Pardoner. But now, as then, the murdered white body was covered with perfumes and with tears sweeter than perfumes.

Then, when the hundred pounds of Nicodemus had covered Jesus with a fragrant pall, the winding sheet was tied about the body with long linen bands, the head was wrapped in a napkin and another white cloth was spread over the face, after they had all kissed Him on the forehead.

There was space but for one body in the open sepulcher. Recently made, it had never been used. Joseph of Arimathea, not able to save Christ alive in any of his houses, now that the fury of the world had died down, gave up to Him the dark subterranean habitation hewn in the rock, and intended for his own dead body. According to the ritual the two Sanhedrists recited aloud the mortuary psalm, and finally, after they had placed the white-wrapped body in the cave, they closed the opening with a great stone and went away silently, followed by the others.

But the women did not follow them. They could not bring themselves to leave that rock which separated them forever from Him whom they loved more than their beauty. How could they leave Him alone in the darkness, doubly black, of the night and of the tomb, He who had been so desperately alone in His long death agony? They whispered prayers, and recalled to each other the memory of a day, or a gesture, or a word of the loved one, and if one of them tried to comfort another, the second but sobbed more bitterly. Sometimes they called Him by name as they leaned against the rock, and spoke lovingly to Him now that His ears were closed in death, as they had not dared while He was alive. They poured out, at last in the damp black shade of the garden, that love greater than love, which their poor, limited human hearts could no longer hold back.

Then finally, chilled and terrified by the night's blackness, they too went away, their eyes burning, stumbling amid the bushes and the stones, promising one another to return there as soon as the feast-day had passed.

HE IS NOT HERE

The sun had not yet risen on the day which for us is Sunday, when the women once more drew near to the garden; but over the eastern hills a white hope, light as the distant reflection of an earth clothed with lilies and silver, rose slowly in the midst of the throbbing constellations, vanquishing little by little the sparkling brilliance of the night. It was one of those calm dawns, suggesting innocents asleep, and the clear benign air seemed stirred as by a recent stir of angels' wings. It seemed one of the virginal days, ushered in with transparent pallor, shy and cheerful with cool breezes.

In the half light, the women advanced, breathed upon by wandering airs, lost in their sadness, under the spell of an emotion they could not have explained. Were they returning to weep upon the rock? Or to see Him once more, He who had captured their hearts without laying them waste? Or to put about the body of the Immaculate One spices stronger than those of Nicodemus? And speaking among themselves, they said, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?"

There were four of them, since Joanna of Cusa and Salome had joined Mary of Magdala and Mary of Bethany, but they were women and weakened by their sorrow.

But when they came to the rock they stood still, astounded. The opening into the sepulcher showed black against the darkness. Not believing her eyes, the boldest of them touched the sill with her trembling hands. In the daylight, brightening now with every moment, they saw the stone there beside them, leaning against the rocks.

The women, struck into silence by their fright, turned around as if expecting some one to come to tell them what had happened in those two nights which had passed. Mary of Magdala feared at once that the Jews, not satisfied with what they had made Him suffer when He was alive, had stolen away the body of Christ; or perhaps, unwilling to have the honorable sepulcher used by a heretic, they had thrown Him into the shameful common grave used for men stoned and crucified.

But this was no more than a presentiment. Perhaps Jesus was still lying inside in His perfumed wrappings. Enter they dared not, yet they could not bear to go away, not knowing what had happened. As soon as the sun, risen at last above the summit of the hills, shone into the opening of the sepulcher, they took courage and entered.

At first they saw nothing, but they were shaken by a new fear. At their right, seated, was a young man clothed in a long white garment, showing in that darkness like snow. He seemed to be awaiting them.

"Be not affrighted: he is not here: for he is risen. Why seek ye the living among the dead? Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."

The women listened, terrified and trembling, not able to answer, but the youth went on, "Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him."

All four of them, quivering with terror and joy, left the grotto to hasten where they had been sent. But after a few steps, when they were almost outside the garden, Mary of Magdala stopped, and the others went along the road towards the city without waiting for her. She herself did not know why she had remained behind. Perhaps the words of the unknown youth had not convinced her, and she remembered that they had not even made sure that the sepulcher was really empty; perhaps the youth in white was an accomplice of the priests who wished to deceive them?

Suddenly she turned and saw a man near her, outlined against the green of the garden, and the sunlight; but she did not recognize Him even when He spoke. "Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?"

Mary thought that it might be Joseph's gardener come early to his work. "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away."

The unknown man, touched by this impassioned candor, by this child-like simplicity, answered only one word, spoke only one name, her name, pronounced longingly, wistfully in the touching and unforgettable voice which had called her so many times: "Mary!"

At this, as if awakened with a start, the despairing woman found her lost Master: "Rabboni, Master!" And she fell at His feet in the dewy grass and clasped in her hands those bare feet still showing the two red marks of the nails.

But Jesus said to her, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and to your God."

And at once, He withdrew from the kneeling woman, and moved away among the plants, crowned with sunshine.

Mary watched Him until He had disappeared; then she lifted herself up from the grass, her face convulsed, wild, blind with joy, and ran after her companions.

They had but just come to the house where the Disciples were in hiding and they had told hastily and breathlessly the incredible news: the sepulcher opened, the youth clad in white, the things which he had said, the Master risen, the message to His brothers.

But the men, still stunned by the catastrophe, and who in these dangerous days had shown themselves more torpid and passive than the weaker women, were not willing to believe this wildly improbable news. Hallucinations, women's dreams, they said. How could He be risen from the dead after only two days? He had said that He would return, but not at once: so many terrible things were to be seen before that day of His return!

They believed in the resurrection of the Master, but not before the day when all the dead would rise again, and He would come in glory to rule His kingdom. But not now: it was too soon, it could not be true: waking dreams of hysteric women!

But in the meantime, Mary of Magdala rushed in, breathless with haste and agitation. What the others had said was all true. But there was more: she herself had seen Him with her own eyes, and He had spoken to her, and she had not known Him at once, but had recognized Him as soon as He had called her by name: she had touched His feet with her hands, had seen the wounds on His feet; it was He, alive once more; and He had told her, as had the unknown youth, to go to His brethren, so that they should know that He had risen from the dead as He had promised.

Simon and John, finally aroused, rushed out of the house and began to run towards Joseph's garden. John, who was younger, outran Peter and came first to the sepulcher. He looked through the door, saw the linen cloths lying on the ground, but did not go in. Simon came up panting and rushed into the grotto. The linen cloths were lying on the ground, but the napkin which had been about the head of the corpse was folded and wrapped together in a place by itself. John also went in, saw, and believed. And without another word they returned in all haste towards the house, still running, as if they expected to find the Risen One in the midst of the others whom they had left.

But Jesus, after He had left Mary, withdrew from Jerusalem.

EMMAUS

After the solemn interval of the Passover, plain, ordinary everyday life began again for all men.

Two friends of Jesus, among those who were in the house with the Disciples, were to go that morning on an errand to Emmaus, a hamlet about two hours' journey from Jerusalem. They left as soon as Simon and John had returned from the sepulcher. All these amazing tales had shaken them somewhat, but had not really convinced them of an event so portentous and unexpected. Serious-minded men, they could not understand or believe what they had heard: if the body of the Master was no longer there, might it not have been taken away by men's hands?

Cleopas and his companion were good Jews, men who left a place for the ideal in their minds, burdened with many material cares. But this place for the ideal was not to be too large, and this ideal must be commensurate with their own natures if it were not to be expelled as an unwelcome guest. Like almost all the Disciples, they too expected the coming of a Liberator, but of one who would come to liberate Israel first of all,—a Messiah, in short, who should be the son of David rather than the Son of God, a warrior on horseback rather than a poor pedestrian, a scourge of His enemies and not a lover of sick people and children. The words of Christ had almost given them a glimpse of higher truths, but the crucifixion disheartened them. They loved Jesus, and they suffered in His suffering, but this sudden, shameful ending without glory and without resistance was too great a contrast to what they had expected, and especially to much of what they had hoped. They could understand that He might be a humble Saviour, riding on gentle asses instead of on warlike chargers, and a little more spiritual and gentle than they would have liked; they could understand this, although with difficulty, and endure it although grudgingly. But that the Liberator had not known how to free either Himself or others, that the Messiah of the Jews should have died through the will of so many Jews on the scaffold of murderers and parricides, was too great a disappointment,—an inexcusable scandal. They pitied the crucified leader with all their hearts, but at the same time they were tempted to believe that they had been deceived about His real nature. His death—and what a death!—looked to their narrow, practical minds sadly like a failure.

They were reasoning together of all these things as they went along under the warm noonday sun and at times the discussion grew hot, for they did not always agree. Then suddenly they caught a glimpse of a shadow on the ground near them. They turned around. The shadow was that of a man who was following as if he wished to hear what they were saying. They stopped, as was the custom, to greet him, and the traveler joined them. His did not seem an unknown face to the two men, but look at him as they might, they could not think who it was. The newcomer, instead of answering their silent questions, asked them, "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk?"

Cleopas, who must have been the older, answered with a wondering gesture, "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?"

"What things?" asked the unknown man.

"Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not."

"O fools, and slow of heart," exclaimed the stranger, "to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" Do you not remember how He was predicted from Moses down to our own time? Have you not read Ezekiel and Daniel? Do you not even know our songs of the Lord and His promises?

And almost indignantly He recited the old words and the prophecies, recalled the description of the Man of Sorrows given by Isaiah. The two listened, docile and attentive, without answering, because the newcomer spoke with so much heat, and the old admonitions in His mouth took on new warmth and a meaning so clear that it seemed almost impossible that they had not understood them before. The talk of the newcomer gave them the impression of being the echo of other talks like those heard in times past, but confusedly, like a voice from the other side of a wall.

In the meantime they had arrived at the entrance of Emmaus, and the pilgrim made as though He would have gone further. But now the two friends were not willing to part with their mysterious companion, and they begged Him to stay with them. The sun was going down, throwing a warmer golden light on the countryside, and their three shadows had lengthened on the dusty road.

"Abide with us," they said, "for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." Also thou art tired and it is the hour for food. And they took Him by the hand and made Him come into the house where they were going.

When they were at table, the guest who sat between them took bread, and broke it and gave a little to one of His friends. At this action, the eyes of Cleopas and the other man were opened, as when we are suddenly wakened and find the sun shining. Both of them sprang to their feet, trembling with emotion, pale, amazed, and finally knew Him, the murdered man whom they had misunderstood and slandered. But they had no time even to run to kiss Him, for Jesus vanished out of their sight.

They had not recognized Him when they had seen Him, not even by His speech, although that was so like His speech in His lifetime; they had not recognized Him even by the light of His eyes while He spoke, nor by the sound of His voice! But when He took the bread in His hands, like a father who shares it with His children in the evening after a day of work or of travel, in that loving action which they had seen Him perform so many times in their hastily arranged intimate suppers, they had recognized His hands, His blessed and wounded hands, and the cloud lifted and they found themselves face to face with the splendor of Christ risen from the dead. In His first life when He was their friend they had not understood Him; when on the road to Emmaus He had taught them, they had not recognized Him, but at the moment when He became the loving Master, serving His servants and giving them bread which is life and the hope of life, then for the first time they saw Him.

And tired and fasting as they were, they went back over the road which they had come, and after nightfall arrived at Jerusalem.

And as they went along they said almost shamefacedly, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?"

The Disciples were still awake. Without drawing breath the newcomers told of their encounter and what had been said along the way, and how they had recognized Him only at the moment when He broke the bread. And in answer to this new confirmation, three or four voices cried out together, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon!"

But not all the Apostles were convinced even by these four appearances, by the fourfold testimony. To some, this prompt, this extraordinary resurrection, which had taken place by night in a secret and suspicious manner, seemed more the hallucination of grief and of yearning than actual truth. Who were the people who claimed to have seen Him? A hysterical woman who had been possessed by a devil; a distraught man who had not seemed himself from the moment when he had denied his Master; and two plain fellows who were not even His real Disciples, and whom Jesus had thus chosen, no one knew why, in preference to His closer friends. Mary might have been deceived by a phantom; Simon, to win back his self-respect after his baseness, was determined to do no less than Mary; the others were perhaps impostors or, at the most, visionaries. If Christ were really risen, would not He have been seen by them all while they were together? Why these preferences? Why this appearance at three-score furlongs from Jerusalem?

They believed in His resurrection, but they thought of it as one of the signs of the ending of the world, when everything would be fulfilled. But now that they found themselves confronted with the fact that He alone had risen from the dead while everyday life went on as usual, they realized that the return into life of human flesh (and of human flesh which had not gone to sleep peacefully in the last sleep, but whose life had been torn away by violence), that this idea of rising from the dead not in the distant future but in the immediate present, contradicted all the other concepts which made up the tissue of their minds. They realized that this contradiction had always existed, but their doubt had not risen to consciousness until this brusque encounter of two impossible elements: a remote miracle and an actual fact.

If Jesus had risen from the dead, that would mean that He was really God; but would a real God, a Son of God, ever have been reconciled to allow Himself to be killed, and in so shameful a way? If He could conquer death, why had He not stricken down the judges, put Pilate to confusion, paralyzed the arms of those about to nail Him to the cross? Through what paradoxical mystery had the Omnipotent allowed Himself to be dragged through the ignominy of the weak?

They were reasoning thus among themselves, some of the Disciples who had heard but had not understood. Prudent like all sophists, they did not venture openly to deny the resurrection in the presence of those exalted hearts, but they reserved judgment, turning over in their minds the reasons for its possibility and impossibility, wishing for a manifest confirmation, but unable to hope for one.

In the excitement of the day no one had eaten. But the women had prepared supper, and now all sat down to the table. Simon remembered the Last Thursday: "This do in remembrance of me."

And a flood of tears dimmed his eyes while he broke the bread and gave it to his friends.

HAVE YE HERE ANY MEAT?

They had scarcely eaten the last mouthfuls when Jesus appeared in the doorway, tall and pale. He looked at them one by one, and in His melodious voice greeted them: "Peace be unto you."

No one answered. Their astonishment overcame their joy, even for those who had already seen Him since His death. On their faces the Man risen from the dead read the doubt which He knew they all felt, the question which they did not dare express in words, "Art Thou really Thyself a living man, or a spirit which comes from the caverns of the dead to tempt us?"

"Why are ye troubled?" said the Man who had been betrayed, "and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I, myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."

And He stretched out His hands towards them, showed them the marks still bloody left by the nails, opened His garment over His breast so that they could see the mark of the lance in His side. Some of them, rising from their couches, knelt down and saw on His bare feet the two deep wounds, each with its livid ring around it.

But they could not bring themselves to touch Him, for they feared to see Him disappear suddenly as He had come suddenly. If one of them had embraced Him, would he have felt the warm solidity of a body, or would his arms have passed through the emptiness of a mere shadow?

It was He with His face, with His voice, with the irrefutable traces of the crucifixion, and yet there was something changed in His aspect which they could not have described, even if they had been calm. The most reluctant were forced to believe that the Master stood before them with all the appearance of life begun anew, but their thoughts whirled in the last of their doubts and they were silent as if they were afraid to believe in their senses, as if they expected to wake up, from one moment to another. Even Simon was silent. What could he have said without betraying himself by tears to Him who had looked at him with those same eyes in the courtyard of Caiaphas while he swore that he had never known Him?

To make an end of their last doubts, Jesus asked, "Have ye here any meat?"

He needed no longer any food except that for which He had vainly asked all His life. But these men of the flesh needed a fleshly proof, a material demonstration as was befitting those who believed only in matter and nourished themselves only on matter. They had eaten together on their last evening; this evening also, now that they were again together, He would eat with them. "Have ye here any meat?"

A piece of broiled fish was left in a dish. Simon put it before the Master, who sat down at the table and ate the fish with a piece of bread while they all stared at Him as though it were the first time they had ever seen Him eat.

And when He had finished, He raised His eyes towards them, and, "Are you convinced now, or do you still not understand: does it seem possible to you that a spirit can eat as I have eaten here in your presence? So many times I have been forced to reprove your hardness of heart, and your little faith! And behold you are still as you were at first, and you were not willing to believe those who had seen me, and yet I had hid nothing of what was to happen in these days. But you, deaf and forgetful, hear and then forget, read and do not understand. When I was with you, did I not tell you that all things which were written and which I announced must be fulfilled; that it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem? Now you are witnesses of these things, and behold I send the promise of my Father upon you. Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth, and as the Father sent me, I send you. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned. I will remain here a little and we shall meet again in Galilee, but I am with you always even unto the end of the world."

Little by little as He spoke, His Disciples' faces lighted up with a forgotten hope, and their eyes shone with exaltation. This was the hour of consolation after the gloom of those dreadful days just passed. His indubitable presence showed that the impossible was assured, that God had not abandoned them and never would abandon them. Their enemies, apparently victorious, were conquered; the visible truth bore out all the prophecies. It was true that they had known already everything He was then saying, but those truths really lived in them only when His lips repeated them.

Their King had come back, the Kingdom was near at hand, and His brothers, instead of being derided and persecuted, would reign with Him through all eternity. These words had fired again the most tepid, had brightened the memory of other words, of other sunnier days, and suddenly they felt an exaltation, an ardor, a greater desire to embrace each other, to love each other, never more to be separated from each other. If the Master was risen from the dead, they themselves could not die; if He could leave the sepulcher, His promises were the promises of a God and He would fulfill them to the uttermost. Their faith was not in vain, and they were no longer alone: the crucifixion had been the darkening of one day in order that the light might shine out more splendidly for all the days to come.

THOMAS DIDYMUS

Thomas, called Didymus, was not present when Jesus appeared, but the day after, his friends ran to seek him, still agitated by what Jesus had said. "We have seen the Lord!" they said. "It was really He. He talked with us. He ate with us like a living man."

Thomas was one of those who had been profoundly shaken by the shame of Golgotha. He had said once that he was ready to die with his Master, but he had fled away with the others when the lanterns of the guard had appeared on the Mount of Olives. His faith had been darkened by the gloom which had shut down on Golgotha. In spite of Christ's warnings, he had never once thought that the end of his Master could be thus. To think of the shame into which Jesus let himself be led, with the passivity of a feeble sheep, made him suffer, almost more than the loss of Him who had loved him. This disappointment of all his hopes had shocked him almost as though he had discovered that he had been cheated, and in his eyes his disappointment excused even the shame of their abandoning Him. Thomas, like Cleopas and his comrades, was a sensualist, whom the exalted example of Christ had lifted high into a world which was not his own. Faith had taken him unawares, like a contagious fervor. But as soon as the flame which had kindled him anew every day was buried, or seemed buried, under the shameful stoning of hate, the light of his soul burned low, and grew cold. He took on again his first character, his real character, which sought tangible things with the senses, hoped for material changes in matter, and expected to find only in material things material certainties and consolations. His eyes refused to look at the things which his hands could not touch, and for this he was condemned never to see the invisible,—a grace reserved only for those who believe it possible. He hoped for the Kingdom, especially when the words and the presence of Jesus brightened his earthly heart with the light of Heaven, but not for a purely spiritual Kingdom floating in the firmament among the unsubstantial islands of the clouds, but a kingdom where living, warm-blooded men might have eaten and drunk at solid and tangible tables, might govern with new laws a fairer earth assigned to them by God.

Thomas, after the scandal of the crucifixion, was not at all disposed to believe a hearsay report of the resurrection. He had seen his first beliefs too roughly disabused to put any faith now in his equally deceived companions. And he answered to those who joyfully brought him the news, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe."

He had said at first, "Except I shall see." But he corrected himself at once: even his eyes could deceive him, and many men were cheated by visions. And his thoughts went on to a material test, to the coarse, brutal proof of fact,—to put his finger there where the nails had been, to put his hand, his whole hand, where the lance had penetrated. To do as a blind man does who sometimes is less mistaken than men who see.

He rejected faith which is the higher vision of the soul. He even refused to have faith in the sight of his eyes, the most divine of our bodily senses. He put his faith only in his hands, flesh handling flesh. This double denial left him in the dark, groping like a blind man, until the Light made Man, through a supreme loving concession, gave him back light for his eyes and for his heart.

But this answer of Thomas has made him one of the most famous men in the world: for it is Christ's eternal characteristic to immortalize even those men who affronted Him. All those afraid to touch spiritual concepts for fear of breaking them, all cheap skeptics, all the misers in academic chairs, all tepid half-wits stuffed with prejudices, all the faint-hearted, sophists, the cynics, the beggars and the retort-cleaners of science; in short all rush-lights jealous of the sun, all geese hissing at the flight of soaring falcons, have chosen for their protector and patron Thomas called Didymus. They know nothing of him except this: he does not believe in what he cannot touch. This answer seems to them the sum-total of perfect good sense. Let anybody who wishes claim that he sees in the darkness, hears in the silence, speaks in solitude, lives in death; the followers of Thomas can get no such idea into their thick, dense heads. So-called "reality" is their stronghold, and they will not budge from it. They prefer to fill their lives with gold which satisfies no hunger, with land in which they will occupy so small a cavity, with glory so fleeting a whisper in the silence of eternity, with flesh which is to become worm-eaten corruption, and with those noisy, magic discoveries which after enslaving men hurry them towards the formidable discovery of death. These and other things like them are "real things," beloved by the devotees of Thomas. But perhaps if they had ever had the idea of reading what happened after that answer made by Thomas, they would have their doubts even of him who doubted the resurrection.

A week later, the Disciples were in the same house as on the first occasion and Thomas was with them. He had hoped all that week that he also might be permitted to see the risen Master, and sometimes he had trembled, thinking that his answer might be the reason for Christ's absence; but suddenly there came a voice at the door, "Peace be unto you."

Jesus entered, his eyes seeking out Thomas: He came for Thomas, for him alone, because Christ's love for him was greater than any affront. And He called him by name and came up to him so that he could see Him clearly, face to face, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing."

But Thomas did not obey Him. He dared not put his finger in the nail print nor his hand in the wound. He only said to him: "My Lord and my God."

With these words which seemed an ordinary greeting, Thomas admitted his defeat, fairer than any victory; and from that moment he was wholly Christ's. Up to that time he had revered Him as a man more perfect than others, now he recognized Him as God, as his God.

Then Jesus, who could not forget Thomas' doubt, answered, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

This is the last of the Beatitudes and the greatest: blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed, for in spite of the theories of the dissectors of corpses, the only truths which have an absolute value in reality are those which the eyes of the flesh cannot see and hands of flesh and blood can never handle. These truths come from on high and reach the soul directly: the man whose soul is locked shut cannot receive them, and will see them only on the day in which his body, with its five limited doorways, is like a shabby worn-out garment left upon a bed, in the interval before men hide it underground like a noisome afterbirth.

Thomas is one of the saints and yet he was not one of those blest by that Beatitude. An old legend relates that up to the day of his death his hand was red with blood, a legend true with all the truth of a terrible symbolical meaning, if we understand from it that incredulity can be a form of murder. The world is full of such assassins who have begun by assassinating their own souls.

THE REJECTION OF THE RESURRECTION

Christ's first companions were at last convinced that His second and eternal life had begun. He who had been killed, who had slept as a corpse sleeps, covered with the perfumes of Nicodemus and the winding-sheet of Joseph, had after two days awakened like a God. But how long it took them to admit the reality of His return!

And yet the enemies of Christ, to make an end to the greatest obstacles in the way of their other negations, have accused those very astonished, perplexed Disciples with having willingly or unwillingly invented the myth of the resurrection. Caiaphas and his followers claimed that the Disciples carried off the body by night and then spread around the news of the empty sepulcher in order that weak-headed mystics might more readily believe that Christ was risen and thus allow those cheats to continue their pestiferous trickery in the name of the dead Trickster. And Matthew says that the Jews bought some witnesses with "large money" that if needful they should report that they had seen Simon and his accomplices violate the sepulcher and carry away on their shoulders a heavy burden wrapped in white.

But His modern enemies, through a last remnant of respect for those who founded with their blood the indestructible Church, or rather through their profound conviction of the simple-mindedness of the first martyrs, have given up this idea of deceit. Neither Simon nor the others could have acted out such a deception; they never could have kept such a piece of trickery straight in their poor thick heads. But if they were not consciously deceiving, they were certainly stupid victims of their own fancy or of the knavery of others.

These enemies of Christ affirm that the Disciples hoped so vividly to see Jesus rise from the dead as He had promised, and that the resurrection was so urgently needed to counteract the disgrace of the crucifixion, that they were induced, almost forced, to expect it and to announce it as imminent. Then in that atmosphere of superstitious suspense, the vision of a hysterical woman, the hallucination of a dreamer, the delusion of an unbalanced man sufficed to spread the news of the appearance of Christ about the little circle of the desolate survivors. Some of them, unable to believe that the Master had deceived them, easily put their faith in the affirmations of those who claimed to have seen Him after His death. And, by dint of repeating the fantasies of these wild dreams, they ended by taking them seriously themselves and by convincing the more candid souls. Only on condition of such a posthumous confirmation of the divinity of the dead man was it possible to hold together those who had followed Him and to create the first stable organization of the universal Church.

But those who with their accusations of stupidity or fraud try to undermine the certainty of the first Christian generation, forget too many things and too many essential things.

First of all is the testimony of Paul. Saul the Pharisee had been to school to Gamaliel, and might have been present, even though at a distance and as an enemy, at Christ's death, and certainly knew all the theories of his early teachers, the Jews, about the pretended resurrection. But Paul, who received the first Gospel from the lips of James, called the brother of the Lord, and from Simon, Paul famous in all the churches of the Jews and the Gentiles, wrote thus in his first letter to the Corinthians: "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep." The Letter to the Corinthians is recognized as authentic even by the most disdainful and suspicious nosers-out of falsification. The first Letter to the Corinthians cannot have been written later than the spring of the year 58, and hence it is older than the oldest Gospel. Many of those who had known the living Christ were still living at that time and could easily have contradicted or undeceived the Apostle. Corinth was at the gates of Asia, inhabited by many Asiatics, in close relation with Judea; Paul's letters were public messages which were publicly read at gatherings, and copies of them were made to send to other churches. The solemn and specific testimony of Paul must have come to Jerusalem, where the enemies of Jesus, many of them still alive, would have found some way to controvert them by other witnesses. If Paul could have thought a valid confutation possible, he never would have dared write those words. That he was able therefore, so short a time after the event, publicly to affirm a prodigy so contrary to ordinary beliefs and to the interests of Christ's watchful enemies, shows that the resurrection was not merely a phantasy of a few fanatics, but a certainty denied with difficulty, easily proved. We have no other record except this letter of Paul's of the appearance of Christ to the five hundred brothers, but we cannot even for a moment imagine that Paul, one of the greatest and purest souls of early Christianity, could have invented it,—he who had so long persecuted those who believed in the reality of the resurrection. It is extremely probable that the appearance of Christ to the five hundred happened in Galilee on the mountain spoken of by Matthew, and that the Apostle had known one of those who had been present at that memorable meeting.

But this is not all. The Evangelists, who set down with some incoherence, but with the greatest frankness, the recollections of Jesus' first companions, admit, perhaps without wishing to, that the Apostles themselves did not expect the resurrection and found it hard to believe. When we read the four Gospels with attention we see that they continued to doubt even with the risen Christ before them. When on Sunday morning the women ran to tell the Disciples that the sepulcher was empty and Christ alive, the Disciples accused them of raving. When later He appeared to many in Galilee: "And when they saw him, they worshipped him:" said Matthew; "but some doubted." And when He appeared at evening in the room where they were taking supper, there were some who could not believe their own eyes and hesitated until they had seen Him eating. Thomas still doubted after this, until the moment when his Lord's body was actually before his own.

So little did they expect to see Him rise again that the first effect upon them of His appearance was fright. "They were affrighted and supposed that they had seen a spirit." They were therefore not so credulous and easily fooled as their defamers would have them. And they were so far from the idea of seeing Him return a living man among the living that when they first saw Him they mistook Him for another. Mary of Magdala thought that He was the gardener of Joseph of Arimathea; Cleopas and his companions were not able to recognize Him all along the road; Simon and the others when He came to them upon the shore of the lake, "knew not that it was Jesus." If they had really been expecting Him, Himself, their minds on the alert, burning with longing, would they have been frightened, would they not have known Him at once? When we read the Gospels, we get the impression that Christ's friends, far from inventing His return, accepted it almost because they were forced, by external coercion, and after much hesitation; the exact contrary, in short, of what is desired to be proved by those who accuse Christ's friends of being deceived or of having deceived.

But why this hesitation? Because the warnings of Christ had not been able to dislodge from those slow and indocile minds the old Jewish repugnance to the idea of immortality. The belief in the resurrection of the dead was for centuries and centuries foreign to the wholly material mentality of the Jews. In a few prophets like Daniel and Hosea there are some passing traces of the idea, but it does not appear explicitly except in one passage of the story of the Maccabees. At the time of Christ the common people had a confused idea of it as a distant miracle, a part of the conceptions of the Apocalyptic writers, but they did not think it possible before the final upheaval of the great day: the Sadducees denied it firmly and the Pharisees admitted it as the remote and common reward of all righteous men. When the superstitious Antipas said that Christ was John risen from the dead, he meant to say with a vigorous figure of speech that the new Prophet was like a second John.

Reluctance to admit such an extraordinary infraction of the laws of death was so profoundly rooted in the Jewish people that the very Disciples of Christ were not disposed to admit the possibility of the resurrection without reiterated proofs, although they had seen Him raise others from the dead and had heard Him predict His own resurrection. And yet they had seen Him bring to life with His powerful summons the son of the Widow of Nain, the daughter of Jairus, the brother of Martha and Mary: the three sleepers whom Jesus had awakened because of His compassion for the grief of a mother, of a father, of a sister. But it was the habit and the fate of the Twelve to misunderstand and to forget. They were too set upon their material thoughts to be ready to believe at once such a victory over death. But when they were convinced, their certainty was so firm and strong that from the sowing of those first enforced witnesses has sprung up an enormous harvest of men born again in the faith of the resurrected One —which the centuries have not yet mowed down.

The calumnies of the Jews, the accusations of false witnesses, the doubts of the Disciples, the plots of implacable enemies, the fallacious sophistry of the progeny of Thomas, the fantasies of heresiarchs, the distorted conceptions of men eager to prove Christ definitely dead, the turns and twists of the myth-spinners, the mines and assaults of the higher and lower criticism have not availed to wrench from the millions of human hearts the certainty that the body taken down from the cross of Golgotha reappeared on the third day to die no more. The people chosen by Christ condemned Him to death, hoping to have done with Him, but death refused Him as the Jews had refused Him, and humanity has not yet finished its accounting with that assassinated Man who came out from the sepulcher to show that breast where the Roman lance had forever made visible the heart which loves those who hate Him.

The cowardly souls who will not believe in His first life, in His second life, in His eternal life, cut themselves off from true life: from life which is generous acceptance, spontaneous love, hope in the invisible, certainty of the truth which passeth understanding. They themselves are dead, although they seem living, those who refuse Him, as death refused Him. Those who drag the weight of their still warm and breathing corpses over the patient earth laugh at the resurrection. The second birth in the spirit will not be granted to those who reject life, but an appalling and inevitable resurrection will be granted to them on the last day.

THE RETURN BY THE SEA

When the tragedy had drawn to a close with its greatest sorrow, its greatest joy, every one turned again to his own destination, the Son to the Father, the King to His Kingdom, the High Priest to his basins of blood, the fishermen to their nets.

These water-soaked nets, with broken meshes, torn by the unaccustomed weight of the great draughts, so many times mended, patched, knotted together again, which had been left by the first fishers of men without one backward look, on the shores of Capernaum, had finally been mended and laid on one side, by some one with the prudence of the stay-at-home who knows that dreams are soon over and hunger lasts for all one's lifetime. The wife of Simon, the father of James and John, the brother of Thomas, had saved the casting nets and the drag-nets as tools which might be useful, in memory of the exiles, as if a voice had said to those who had remained at home: "They too will come back; the Kingdom is fair, but far distant, and the lake is fair now, to-day, and full of fish. Holy is holiness, but no man lives by the spirit alone. And a fish on the table now is worth more to a hungry man than a throne a year from now."

And for a time the wisdom of the stay-at-homes, taken root in their native countryside like moss on a stone, was vindicated. The fishermen returned. The fishers of men appeared again in Galilee and once more took the old nets into their hands. They had received the order of Him who had drawn them away from there that they should be witnesses to His shame and to His glory. They had not forgotten Him and they could never forget Him: they always talked of Him among themselves and with all those who were willing to listen to them. But Christ on His return had said, "We will meet again in Galilee." And they had gone away from ill-omened Judea, from the mercenary city ruled by its murderous masters, and they had trod once more the road back to their sweet, calm fatherland, whence the loving ravisher of souls had snatched them away. The old houses had a mellow beauty, with the white banners of newly washed linen, and the young grass greening along the old walls, and the tables cleaned by humble old hands, and the oven, which every week spat out sparks from its flaming mouth. And the quiet fishing-town had beauty, too; with its tanned naked boys, the sun high over the level market-place, the bags and baskets in the shadow of the inns, and the smell of fish which at dawn was wafted over it, with the morning breeze. But more beautiful than all was the lake: a gray-blue and slate-colored expanse on cloudy afternoons: a milky basin of opal with lines and patches of jacinth on warm evenings; a dark shadow flecked with white on starry nights: a silvery, heaving shadow in the moonlight. On this lake which seemed the very spirit of the quiet, happy countryside, the fishermen's eyes had for the first time discovered the beauty of light and of water, nobler than the heavy unlovely earth and kinder than fire. The boat with its slanting sails, its worn seats, the high red rudder, had from their childhood been dearer to them than that other home which awaited them, stationary, whitened, four-square on the bank. Those infinitely long hours of tedium and of hope as they gazed at the brilliant water, the swaying of the nets, the darkening of the sky, had filled the greater part of their poor and homely lives.

Then came the day when a Master, poorer and more powerful than they, had called them to Himself to be workers with Him in a supernatural, perilous undertaking. The poor souls uprooted from their usual surroundings had done their best to be lighted by that flame, but the new life had trodden them out like grapes in the wine-press, like olives in the olive crusher in order that their rough hearts should yield up tears of love and pity.

It was only after the Cross had been raised on Golgotha that they had wept with true sorrow: and only after the Crucified Leader had returned to break bread with them that they had been kindled anew to hope.

And now they had come home, bringing back only a few recollections, and yet those recollections were enough to transform the world. But before beginning the work which He had commanded, they were waiting to see Him whom they loved in the place which He had loved. They were different men from the men who had gone away, more restless, sadder, almost estranged, as if they had come back from the land of the lotus-eaters and saw from beyond with purer eyes a new earth indissolubly united with Heaven. But the nets were there, hung up on the walls, and the boats at anchor swayed up and down on the water. Once more the fishers of men, perhaps out of nostalgia, perhaps out of material need, began to be lake fishermen.

Seven Disciples of Christ were together one evening in the harbor of Capernaum, Simon called Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael of Cana, James, John and two others. Simon said, "I go afishing."

His friends answered, "We also go with thee."

They went into the boat and put off, but all that night they caught nothing. When day came, a little depressed because of the wasted night, they came back towards the shore. And when they were near they saw in the faint light of the dawn a man standing on the shore, who seemed to be waiting for them. "But the disciples knew not that it was Jesus."

"Children, have ye any meat?" called the unknown man.

And they answered, "No."

"Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find."

They obeyed and in a moment the net was so full that they were scarcely able to draw it in. And they all began to tremble because they had guessed who it was awaiting them.

"It is the Lord," said John to Simon.

Peter answered nothing, but hastily drew on his fisher's coat (for he was naked), and cast himself into the sea that he might be first on shore. The boat was scarcely two hundred cubits from the land and in a few moments the seven Disciples were about their Lord. And no one asked Him, "Who art thou?"—because they had recognized Him.

On the shore there were bread and a lighted brazier with fishes broiling on it, and Jesus said, "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught."

And for the last time He broke the Bread and gave to them and the fish likewise. After they had finished eating Jesus turned to Simon and under His look the unhappy man, silent till then, turned pale: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?"

The man who had denied Him, when he heard this question full of tenderness, but for him so cruel, felt himself carried back to another place beside another brazier with other questions put to him, and he remembered the answer he had made then, and the look from Christ about to die and his own great lamentation in the night. And he dared not answer as he wished: "Yes" in his mouth would have been boasting and shamelessness: "No" would have been a shameful lie.

"Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."

He made no claim for himself but "thou knowest that I love thee," Thou who knowest all and seest into the most hidden hearts. "I love thee": but he had not the courage to add "more than these" in the presence of the others, who knew what he had done.

Christ said to him, "Feed my lambs."

And for the second time He asked him: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

And Peter in his trouble found no other answer than, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."

Why dost Thou still make me suffer? Dost Thou not know without my telling Thee that I love Thee, that I love Thee more than at first, as I have never loved Thee, and that I will give up my life to affirm my love?

Then Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

And for the third time He insisted, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

He was drawing from Peter three affirmations, three new promises to cancel his three denials at Jerusalem. But Peter could not endure this repeated suffering. Almost weeping, He cried out, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee!"

The terrible ordeal was over, and Jesus went on, "Feed my sheep. Verily, verily I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry whither thou wouldest not."

That is, to the cross, like the cross where they nailed me. Know, therefore, what it means to love me. My love is brother to death. Because I love you, they have killed me: for your love for me, they will kill you. Think, Simon, son of Jonas, what is the covenant which you make with me, and the fate which is before you. From now on, I shall not be at hand to take you back, to give you the peace of forgiveness, after coward fallings from grace. From now on defections and desertions will be a thousand times more serious. You must answer for all the lambs which I leave in your care and as reward at the end of your labors you will have two crossed beams, and four nails as I had, and life eternal. Choose: it is the last time that you can choose and it is a choice for all time—irrevocable. For an account will be asked of you as a servant left in the place of his master: and now that you know all and have decided, come with me.

"Follow me!"

Peter obeyed, but turning about saw John coming after him and said, "Lord, and what shall this man do?"

Jesus said to him, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me!"

For Simon the primacy and martyrdom; for John immortality and endless waiting. He who bore the same name as the precursor of Christ's first coming was to prophesy His second coming. The historian of the end was to be persecuted, a solitary prisoner, but he was to live longer than all the others and to see with his own eyes the crumbling of the stones, not one left upon another, of the ill-omened hill of Jerusalem. In his sonorous blue desert, in the midst of the blinding light and the immense blackness of the midnight sea, in his vision of the great deeds of the last day he will rejoice and suffer. Peter followed Christ, was crucified for Christ and left behind him the eternal dynasty of the Vicars of Christ: but John was not permitted to find rest in death: he waits with us, the contemporary of every generation, silent as love, eternal as hope.

THE CLOUD

Once more they returned to Jerusalem, leaving their nets, this time forever, travelers setting out upon a journey, the stages of which were to be marked by blood.

In the same place where He had gone down to the city glorified by men, in the shade of blossoming branches, He was to rise again after the interval of His dishonor and His resurrection, in the glory of Heaven. He remained in the midst of men, for forty days after the resurrection, for as long a time as He had remained in the desert after His symbolic death by water. Although His body seemed human, His life was transfigured into the ultimate sublimination of humanity and He was ready to enter as pure spirit, into the spirit of the Father from whom He had been separated thirty years before, that He might cast a gleam of heavenly light upon the shadow-darkened world.

He did not, as before, lead a life in common with the Disciples, because He was separated now from the life of living men; but He reappeared to them more than once to confirm His great promises, and perhaps to explain to those most capable of receiving them those mysteries which were not written down in any book but were passed on, under the seal of secrecy, through all the apostolic period and the following periods, and were imperfectly set down later under the title of Arcana Disciplina.

The last time they saw Him was on the Mount of Olives, where before His death He had prophesied the ruin of the Temple and of the city and the signs of His return, and where, in the darkness of night and of anguish, Satan, before his final defeat, had left Him wet with sweat and blood. It was one of the last evenings of May and the clouds in that golden hour, like golden celestial islands in the gold of the setting sun, seemed to rise from the warm earth towards near-by Heaven, like incense from great fragrant offerings. In the fields of grain, the birds began to call back the fledglings to the nests, and the cool breeze lightly shook the branches and their drooping, unripened fruit. From the distant city, still inact, from the pinnacles, the towers and the white squares of the Temple rose a smoky cloud of dust.

And once again the Disciples asked Jesus the question which they had put to Him in the same place on the evening of the two prophecies. Now that He had come back as He had promised, what else were they to await?

"Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"

They may have meant the Kingdom of God, which in their minds, as in the minds of the Prophets, was one with the Kingdom of Israel, since the divine restoration of the earth was to begin with Judea.

Christ answered: "It is not for you to know the times or the season, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

And having said this, He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And while they beheld, He was taken up from the earth and suddenly a shining cloud as on the morning of the Transfiguration wrapped Him about and hid Him from their sight. But they could not look away from the sky and continued to gaze steadfastly up in their astonishment, when two men in white apparel spoke to them: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

Then having prayed in silence, they returned to Jerusalem, glowing with melancholy joy, thinking of the day just begun: the first day of a task which, after two thousand years, is not yet accomplished. They were alone now, alone against that innumerable enemy called the World. But Heaven is not so cut off from the earth as before the coming of Christ; the mystic ladder of Jacob is no longer a lonely man's dream, but is set up on the earth, on this earth which we tread, and above there is an Intercessor who does not forget the ephemeral beings destined to eternal life who, for a time, were His brothers. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" had been one of His last promises and the greatest. He had ascended into Heaven, but Heaven was no longer merely the barren dome where swift, tumultuous storm-clouds appear and disappear; where the stars shine out silently, like the souls of saints.

He is still with us, the Son of Man, who to be nearer Heaven ascended mountains, who was light made manifest, who died, raised above the earth towards the blackness of

Heaven, and rose from the dead to ascend into Heaven in the peacefulness of evening, and who will return again on the clouds of Heaven. He is still present in the world which He meant to free. He is still attentive to our words, if they truly come from the depths of our hearts, to our tears if they are tears of blood in our hearts before being salt drops in our eyes. He is with us, an invisible, benignant guest, never more to leave us, because by His wish our earthly life is an anticipation of the Kingdom of Heaven, and is a part of Heaven from this day on. Christ has taken to Himself as His eternal possession that rough foster-mother of us all, that sphere which is but a point in the infinite and yet contains hope for the infinite; and to-day He is closer to us than when He ate the bread of our fields. No divine promise can be blotted out: the May cloud which hid Him from sight, still hovers near the earth, and every day we raise our weary and mortal eyes to that same Heaven from which He will descend in the terrible splendor of His glory.

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